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STUDIES

IN

EARLY FRENCH POETRY.

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BY

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN one considers that at every respectable school, whether for girls or boys, in England, French is a part of the professed course; that a Frenchman is generally specially retained for this branch of instruction, and that a respectable minority of the pupils are really enabled to read French with something like ease and pleasure, it is singular to note the general ignorance on the subject of French literature and literary history. A sort of impression rests on most minds that French literature begins with the "siècle de Louis Quatorze"; that Boileau, Corneille, Racine were the first French poets; that before them was nothing but the crude efforts of genius struggling with an undeveloped and stubborn language. Some few know of Malherbe, some of Ronsard, and a still smaller number of Clément Marot. How many have heard of François Villon, or Mellin de Saint Gelais? and how many know anything of the enormous literary activity that began in the thirteenth century, was carried on by Rutebeuf, Marie de France, Gaston de Foix, Thibault de Champagne, and Lorris; was fostered by Charles

of Orleans, by Margaret of Valois, by Francis the First; that gave a crowd of versifiers to France, enriched, strengthened, developed, and fixed the French language, and prepared the way for Corneille and for Racine?

The reasons of this ignorance are mainly two; the inefficient and careless way in which French—French, which might be made as useful in education as Latin—is taught, and the lack of English books on the subject. French books, too, are not always easy of access, and our public libraries are generally most deficient in continental literature. And yet the means of acquiring a knowledge of French literature are much more readily got at than those of learning our own. Numberless essays, études, treatises, collections, and histories have been made in France. In no country have writers found so much appreciation; in no country are there more careful editions, more elaborate biographies, and more loving criticism. What the student wants is direction and advice; he has to be told when to read and how; and, in general, he has to be taught that France has a literature independent of the wellknown names, as original and as well worthy of study as that of our own country. In one small field I propose to endeavour to afford him information and direction. Should he wish to study the early efforts of France in poetical literature, I hope that in the following pages he may find matter that may not be wholly waste of time.

For the study of French language and literary history is perhaps more interesting than that of any other nation. It may be traced back farther and more clearly. It lies in one unbroken chain; it grows and spreads like a cone of

light from one point; it flows from one spring, and it is a river with no affluents.

The attempt made with so much learning and ingenuity by Raynouard to prove that all the modern Latin languages spring from one common stock, not Latin, but an intermediate language which he calls "la langue romane," is long since allowed to have been a failure. Every living and dead dialect of this class of languages owes its existence to the fusion of Latin, doubtless the Latin, ungrammatical and vulgar, spoken by the common people and soldiery, with the native tongues of the conquered tribes. And as not only did each tribe speak its own language, but each detached village had its own peculiarities, so there grew up not only great distinctive branches, but for every branch numerous subdivisions. Again, as communication between towns grew up; as song-writers and minstrels went from place to place, these subdivisions would naturally grow fewer and fewer, and towns in different places would become centres of dialect. Thus we have in France two great branches, the Langue d'Oc, and the Langue d'Oil. They grew up side by side, each at first with her family of rustic dependants. The Langue d'Oc was the first to consolidate herself, and by means of a literature unrivalled in its kind to attain to the dignity of one of the languages of the world. But her sister tongue was of slower growth. When we come to the earliest days of her literature, we find three dialects of equal importance; the Norman, the Picard, and the Burgundian. The Norman dialect was spoken and written by the inhabitants of Normandy, a part of Maine, a part of Brittany, Perche, Poitou, and Anjou: the Picard

in Picardy, Artois, Flandre, Bas Maine, Champagne, Lorraine, Hainaut, Namur, Liége, and Brabant: and the Burgundian in Burgundy, Nivernais, Berry, Orléanais, Touraine, Bas Bourbonnais, Anjou, Ile de France, Champagne, Lorraine, Franche Comté, Vaud, Neufchatel, and Berne.[1] Gradually these three dialects, only one language throughout, lost their distinctive characteristics, and became for literature at least, one tongue. Meantime the literature of the Langue d' Oc had blossomed, borne fruit, and died, smitten to death by Simon de Montfort. From her moribund rival, the Langue d' Oil stole material to feed her own writers, and gathered into her own garners what her sister had already reaped. Thenceforth, that is from the fourteenth century, the history of the Langue d' Oil is the history of the French language.

The writer of the history of French literature has to consider the effects of many different influences. There is first the *esprit Gaulois*, a thing much talked about, but little understood. As I understand it, French critics intend by this term to attribute that vein of French wit, so largely intermixed with satire, caustic and malicious, rather than genial, which is found in Villon, Marot, Rabelais, Scarron, Molière, La Fontaine, and others, to the Celtic blood in the national veins. Next comes the influence of Provençal Literature; then the great Italian wave, which had a small precursor in the time of Charles the Sixth; then the Spanish, and lastly the English influence. The short period which our purpose allows us to consider embraces the time immediately

[1] This division is taken from Burguy's *Grammaire de la Langue d' Oil.*

before the Renaissance and its Italian forces; when change was in the air, disquieting men's minds, and when the old spirit collecting all its energy for a final effort gave to the world the last poets of the old school, Charles of Orleans on the one side, and Clément Marot on the other.

As for the growth of the language, curious readers and students will find its story exhaustively treated by Ampère, Chevallet, and Burguy. There is no modern language which offers such an interesting and clearly marked line of investigation. Its development from Latin can be perfectly easily made out from old monuments and writings. Thus the oath pronounced by Louis-le-Germanique and the subjects of Charles-le-Chauve in 842[1] is still preserved: a Cantilène in honour of S. Eulalie of the tenth century remains, and from that time every change in the tongue is marked by some literary relic. Further, the language is almost wholly Latin; the words of Teutonic origin are, though extremely important, comparatively small in number (about a thousand), and the Celtic words are still smaller.

But taking the end of the eighth century as our starting-point, from that day there has been no disturbing force to act on the Langue d'Oil. The occupation of the English in the fifteenth century is no exception, for it lasted less than thirty years, and was, so far as the English soldiers themselves were concerned, an armed encampment in a hostile country. They went away without leaving one trace of their possession in language, literature, or manners, if we except the hatred to the English name that remained behind

[1] See note at end of this chapter.

them. In England, on the other hand, beside the dialects of early English, or what, for want of a better name, we call Anglo-Saxon and late Saxon, there was the language of the court and its literature in Norman French. These streams ran together; one did not supplant the other, nor did one disappear; the Saxon literature and the Norman joined their waters. How long it took to thoroughly effect the fusion may be judged by comparing the English of Charles of Orleans and his time with his French; or by remembering that while Mellin de St. Gelais, imbued with the Italian spirit, was writing his sprightly songs, we had nothing better to show in English than Lydgate, Skelton, and Barclay; or while the Parliament of Devils represents our stage in poetry, Alain Chartier and Christine de Pisan had already begun to write.

Let us sail rapidly down this single stream of French Poetry. As we go on, the waters grow deeper and the banks broader; we leave the still life of the monotonous meadows, and emerge into a varied and picturesque country; we pass through villages, where the rustics, gathered round the door of the auberge, listen to the jolly miller singing the praise of cider: we flow by the monasteries and hear sometimes the Catholic hymn and the swell of the organ; sometimes the lament of the prodigal, dying before his time; and sometimes the refrain of roystering brethren disturbing the midnight peace; we flow by castles where jousts and tourneys are going on; with gallant knights in glittering armour and belles dames in silken sheen, joyous to behold; minstrels strike their lutes along our banks and sing of love, and youth, spring-time, and song, and folly; the Spirit of

France goes with us and weeps over her desolated land, or laughs to see her soldiers win the fight; we pass through the town and see the honest burghers in the market-place laughing at Roger Bontemps as he cracks his expected jokes; outside the town is a gang of thieves and strollers, —they are eating what they have stolen—la grosse Margot is with them, and one is singing: *these* pass away, but the song remains, and the memory of the singer. King and bishop, lord and lady, judge and lawyer, and criminal, knight and man-at-arms, clerk and monk—we pass by all, and hear in their songs as they go what manner of men they were. The song grows louder, the child-voice strengthens, thought follows wonder, light follows daybreak, the stream has become a river; see, on the banks, Ronsard pipes on one side, and Malherbe pipes on the other; and now we may rest awhile, for the next breath of wind in our sails takes us out of these dreamy old scenes,—ablaze with light and colour,—to the trim lawns and meadows of Louis Quatorze, where, courtly, correct, classical, and bewigged, we must needs stop to admire, however much we yawn.

The earlier French literature, then, consists of the popular epic, the conte or fabliau, the romance, and the chronicle. The epics are divided into three distinct cycles. The first has been called the Carlovingian, which embraces not only the epics in honour of Charlemagne, but also those which speak even of Clovis on one hand, or of Charles the Bald on the other. To this cycle belong, among others, the Chanson de Roland, the Chronique de Turpin, and the Roman des Loherains, containing the story of Garin the Lorrainer. Information on this cycle may be abundantly

found in Mr. Ludlow's work on the 'Popular Epics of the Middle Ages.'

The second epic cycle contains the Arthurian poems, the stories of which are derived from Breton sources, and steeped in the new spirit of chivalry which was gradually growing up. The memory of Charlemagne and his glories was passing away, and a new field was necessary for the imagination of the minstrel. Arthur and the round table supplied it. The Roman du Brut was written by Wace about 1156, which was followed by the Roman du Rou. After Wace, the French trouvères followed up the subject, as the cyclic poets followed up the story of the siege of Troy, until everything possible had been said of it, and men were weary of the name of Arthur. And in the third cycle a new field was again discovered in the stories of antiquity. Then we begin to hear of the siege of Troy, of Ulysses, and of Helen; of Alexander and of Hector.

The middle ages, said Villemain, made use of three mythologies,—the 'mythologie chevaleresque', the 'mythologie allégorique', and the 'mythologie chrétienne.' From the first came a whole crowd of enchanters, fairies, dwarfs, and magicians; from the second, which sprung naturally out of the first, came the personification of all the possible virtues, vices, and thoughts. This it was that gave the world the Roman de la Rose, that grand treasure-house of allegory; where the hero's auxiliaries are *Bel Accueil* and *Doux Regard;* where *Dame Oiseuse* takes him to the castle of *Déduit* (Delight), and Love has his escort of *Joliveté*, *Courtoisie*, *Franchise*, and *Jeunesse.* It took three hundred years for the minds of men to shake off the impression of

this work, and down to Clément Marot we shall find our friends Bel Accueil, Doux Regard, Faux Dangier, Jeunesse, Malebouche and company, acting their parts on the stage. We find the allegorical spirit in Spenser, still apparently fresh and young, though really moribund; and the last wave from this movement of the thirteenth century broke on English ears in the seventeenth, when the best of our allegories, the Pilgrim's Progress, was written.

What Villemain means by Christian Mythology is explained by the existence, side by side with the profane fabliaux, of pious romances, legends of holy men, fabulous histories of saints, and the countless stories of their miracles. This was the natural armour that the Church would put on against scoffers. In an age when imagination ran riot; when the bounds of knowledge were too small, and the fields of wonder too vast for the minds of men, they opposed invention to invention, and the marvels of Saintly legends to the marvels of Merlin and the Forest of Broceliande.

The Chronicle begins with Villehardouin. Of him—who is the most interesting perhaps of all the early French writers—we have little space here to speak; nor of Joinville, Froissart, Philip de Comines, and the host of writers who carried on the story of France and her knights. His work is as much of a romance as a history. It is told in the liveliest and most picturesque manner, at once romantic and real. He shews us that time which seems to us so glittering, brilliant, and gorgeous, as it really was. We see the crusaders, men full of lofty Christian sentiments and mundane ambitions, who had learned to unite the two, and to dream of the slaughter of the Paynim for the glory

of God, and the government of islands for the glory of themselves. For it was no invention or crackbrained fancy of Don Quixote's that faithful squires were rewarded by the government of islands. The East was the field of glory. There were islands to be conquered and ruled; no matter if they were not islands surrounded by the sea; there were kingdoms like the kingdoms of Edessa—marquisates like the Marquisate of Nazareth—duchies like that of Athens or Achaia—to be fought for and won. Corydon, in Clotilde de Surville's tale, becomes Marquis of Trebisonde. Baldwin, in the Chronicle of Villehardouin, and in sober fact becomes king of Constantinople. Men said in those times: "Let us fight; let us offer our arms to the Christian King of Damascus." Where was Damascus? No matter. It was over *there*—in the golden east, in the land of infidels, magicians, and enchantments; where dragons and serpents haunted the deserts; where were lovely groves and splendid palaces, with gardens of eternal spring; where were women as beautiful as the day; where there was no cold nor frost; where to live was happiness, and where to die—for it was all sacred land—was heaven at once, without the intermediate discomforts of purgatory. To be a sinner and a saint at the same time was surely a piece of chance that came but rarely. In Christian times it has only happened for Crusaders.

The colour that these expeditions threw into the literature of their times can be easily imagined. The most holy king that France ever saw—perhaps also the ablest—Saint Louis, gave an impulse to literature that was felt long afterwards. But the thirteenth was in every respect a most remarkable

century, a century of remarkable men. Innocent III. was pope in this century. Philip Augustus, Saint Louis, Philippe le Bel, were kings of France; England got Magna Charta and Edward the First; Italy saw the growth and development of her great towns; Germany had Barbarossa and Frederick the Second.

The literary efforts of France, too, in this century were prodigious. As many as one hundred French poets have been enumerated before the year 1300. I do not know whether this list includes the Troubadours, but these were all dead or dying by the end of the thirteenth century. The mighty calamities that the crusade by Simon de Montfort inflicted on them were never recovered from, the wounds were too deep to be healed, and literature, as well as people and religion, fell not to rise again. Whatever could be taken from the monuments of Provençal literature was taken by the conquerors; their stories, and the form of their songs. Of these imitations and copies, manuscripts exist in the Bibliothéque Impériale, which may be numbered by thousands. These have as yet only been printed in fragments, great masses having never been even read. Even though they should meet with few readers, it would still be good to have these riches in an accessible form. In the words of Villemain, "La vie entière du temps passé est là: il ne faut que de la patience pour tirer de ces ruines la statue compléte du passé." These romances and poems give a most complete insight into the usages of chivalry, and the only possible insight into the manners and thoughts of the age. Of the poets who compiled or wrote them, the name best known is that of Chrétien de Troyes, who belongs

to the twelfth century. He died in 1191, having done a great deal for the language, if he did little for real literature. He wrote romances in verse, such as "Perceval le Gallois, le Chevallier au Lion"; "Guillaume, roi d'Angleterre"; "Ivain fils du roi Urien"; and others. What he left unfinished his successors carried on, so that his name lasted long into the thirteenth century. He has never, I believe, been printed, except in extracts, and is at first difficult to read. For example, this will serve as a specimen of the language of the time.

"Joie ne guerredons d'amours
Ne viennent pas par bel servir:
Car on voit chaus[1] souvent faillir,
Ki[2] servent sans aller aillours.
Fi m'en air
Quant celi serf[3] sans repentir
Ki ne me veut faire secours.

Voirs[4] est c'amours est grant douçours
Quant doi cuer[5] sont un sans partir:
Mais amours fait l'un seul languir,
Et les anuis sentir toujours.
Bien os géhir[6]
Que ne puis à amours venir,
En amours gist tous mes secours."*

Before passing on to more modern French, let me give one more illustration in translation. The following lines are taken from the Chatoiement des Dames in Barbazon's collection. They are rendered almost word for word.

* [1] chaus = ceux. [2] Ki = qui. [3] serf, 3rd person sing. from servir. [4] voirs is vraiment. [5] doi cuer = deux cœurs. [6] bien os géhir = il faut bien avouer. With this assistance there is no difficulty.

"Love is a free and a lawless thing,
Love fears neither count nor king;
Quails not for glittering sword and steel,
Nor flaming tortures fears to feel.
Dreads not waters deep and black,
Not the whole world turns him back;
Little cares he for father or mother,
Little looks he for sister or brother.
Fears not low, nor stoops to high,
Nor thinks it any dread to die.
Love cares nought for buckler and spear
For bar and bolt he will not fear;
Love makes lances shiver and break,
Love makes horses stumble and shake;
Love invents the tourney's fray,
Love makes people happy and gay;
Love ennobles gallantry,
Love hates rude discourtesy;
Love an endless song uplifts,
Love is loaded with precious gifts;
Love hates slothful idleness,
Love makes generous largesse;
Love makes cowards of brave and bold,
Love makes misers lavish their gold;
Love makes peace, and love makes war,
Love makes all the locks unbar;
Love strikes many a gallant blow,
Love descends from high to low;
Love mounts up from low to high,
Nothing too great for love to try.
Love keeps no noble blood intact,
Love suffers many a lawless act;
Love guards not oath or sacrament,
Love despises chastisement;
Love pretends religious zeal,
But cannot keep his reason well;
Love has ruined many a marriage,
Brought low many a warrior's courage;

Love is uncertain, love is vain,
Love puts us all in dolour and pain;
Love is good, and love is bad,
Love makes many a visage sad;
Love to many bringeth sadness,
But to many he bringeth gladness."

We cannot now linger over many of these old names. The best known of them are Rutebeuf, Marie de France, Thibault, count of Champagne, Dans Hélynaud, and Lorris and Jean de Meung, the authors of the Roman de la Rose.

Marie de France was born, as her name indicates, in France, but where or when is not known. She lived and wrote in England during the reign of Henry III., and enjoyed a very great reputation. Her French attains to what may be called the maximum point, the point of highest perfection of the old language before those changes which turned it gradually into modern French. Many of her stories are borrowed from Breton sources, whence it is concluded that she was born in Normandy. This little fable will illustrate the condition of the language in her time.

"Du coc racunte ki[1] munta
Sour un fémier, è si grata
Selunc[2] nature purchaceit,
Sa viande cum[3] il soléit[4]:
Une chière jame[5] truva,
Clère la vit, si l'esgarda;
"Je cuidai," feit il, "purchacier
Ma viande sor cest fémier,
Or ai ici jame truvée,
Par moi ne serez remuée.

[1] Ki = qui. [2] selunc = selon. [3] cum = comun.
[4] soleit = solebat. [5] jame = gem.

S'uns rices hum[1] ci vus truvast,
Bien sai ke d'or vus énurast:[2]
Si en créust vustre clartei,
Pur l'or ki a mult grant biauei.
Qant ma vulentei n'ai de tei
Jà[3] nul hénor n'auraz par mei."

Rutebeuf, the most eminently representative man of his time as a trouvère, lived in the reign of Louis IX. Of his life little is known except what is found in his writings. He has been published by Jubinal. All I can do for him here is to give a short example of his language. He was one of the continuers of the Roman de Renart. In the following specimen, observe the *s* which at that time marked the nominative singular. It comes of course from the Latin, all the words of these languages being formed from the root-form. Thus villano, for the nominative singular gives villanos or *us* by the simple addition of the *s*, and in French *villains*.

"Jadis estoit uns vilains riches,
Qui moult estoit avers et chiches;
Une charrue adès[4] avoit,
Tos tens par lui la maintenoit
D'une jument et d'un roncin;
Assez ot char et pain et vin,
Et quanques mestier li estoit.
Mais por fame que pas n'avoit
Le blasmoient moult si ami,
Et toute la gent autressi;
Il dist volentiers en prendroit
Une bonne se la trovoit."

[1] s'uns rices hum, si un riche homme.
[2] énurast, would have honoured. [3] jà, jamais.
[4] adès, ad ipsum, continually, always.

The works of Rutebeuf are easy to read with a little trouble, and the aid of Burguy's Grammaire de la Langue d'Oil. They will repay the trouble to those who take an interest in the study either of the language or of the literature of France.

Dans Hélynaud was poet-laureate to Philip Augustus, his business being to sing to the king after dinner, or recite deeds of valour and tales of love. The only poem of his that remains is one on *Death*. This, owing to the corruptness of the text, is in parts unintelligible, and is throughout excessively difficult to read. The poem is given in full in Auguis.

Thibault of Champagne was born in 1201, after the death of his father. He was under the protection of Philip Augustus, went crusading, returned safely, governed his states with prudence, cultivated letters, wrote poetry, and died in 1253. This is the story of his life.

He has been called the first of French poets. It is true that critics differ as to who merits this title. Charles of Orleans, Alain Chartier, Villon, Clément Marot, Chrétien de Troyes, Eustache Deschamps, and Marie de France, have all received it from their respective admirers. He wrote songs, tençons, sonnets, and reverdies—this last species being a composition in praise of spring and the return of the flowers; it is called by Marot the *Chant de mai*.

Take these four verses of his song of the Crusade. This song illustrates perfectly the style and language of Thibault.

"Signor, saciez,[1] ki[2] or ne s'en ira
En cele terre, u[3] Diex fu mors et vis,

[1] sachez. [2] qui. [3] u, où.

Et ki la crois d'outre mer ne prendra,
A paines mais[1] ira en paradis;
Ki a en soi pitié et ramembrance
Au haut seignor, doit querre[2] sa venjance,
Et delivrer sa terre et son pais.

Tout li mauvais demorront par deça,
Ki n'aiment Dieu, bien, ne honor, ne pris,
Et chascuns dit, "Ma femme que fera?
Te ne lairoie[3] à nul fuer[4] mes amis:
Cil sont assis en trop fole attendance,
K'il n'est amis fors que cil sans dotance,
Ki pour nos fu en la vraie crois mis.

Or s'en iront cil vaillant bacheler,[5]
Ki aiment Dieu et l'onour de cest mont,
Ki sagement voelent[6] à Dieu aler,
Et li morveus, li cendreux demourront:
Avugle sunt, de ce ne dout-je mie,[7]
Ki un secours ne font Dieu en sa vie,
Et por si pot pert la gloire del mont.

Diex se laissa por nos en crois pener
Et nous dira un jour où tuit[8] venront,
"Vos, ki ma crois m'aidates à porter,
Vos en irez là, où li angele sont,
Là me verrez, et ma mère Marie:
Et vos par qui je n'oi onques aie,[9]
Descendez tuit en enfer le parfont."[10]

The fourteenth century in France brought little literary fruit, except fresh collections of fabliaux. It is remarkable, however, for the completion of one extraordinary book, the

[1] à paines mais, with difficulty. [2] querre, quærere, seek.
[3] lairoie, laisserais. [4] fuer, derived from forum, at no price.
[5] plural, the singular being 'bachelers.' [6] voelent, are willing.
[7] mie, mica, at all. [8] tuit, plural, all.
[9] aie, older form was ajude, aid.
[10] parfond, fond, "Descend all of you to the bottom of hell."

Roman de la Rose, and the appearance of two prolific versifiers, Guillaume de Machau and Eustache Deschamps. A notice of Deschamps will be found farther on. Of the Romance it is only here necessary to add, that it was the parent of an immense stream of allegorical verse, that the taste engendered by its personifications lasted till the sixteenth century, and that it shews the earliest signs of that growing interest in classical literature which preceded the Renaissance. Great writers have imitated it, read it, drawn inspiration from it. Chaucer in England, Marot, and La Fontaine in France, loved it. It was the work of two men, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung. Of the latter it is told that, dying, he left, as a precious legacy to the monks, two weighty coffers supposed to be filled with money. In return for this unexpected gift a rich funeral was accorded the poet by the grateful legatees, but on opening the boxes they were found to contain nothing but slates. The angry monks wished to disinter the poet, but were prevented from doing so by a decree of the parliament. If the story is not true it ought to be. The satirist of the Church could hardly have ended his life in a more consistent manner.

In the fourteenth century, too, lived the French Bunyan. How far the Pilgrim's Progress was original it is difficult to determine. Macaulay asserts that John Bunyan had no assistance whatever, and that Sir Bevis of Southampton was the only book of popular literature that he had ever read. On the other hand, a version of De Guilleville[1] was

[1] His name is spelt in the list of books of the E. E. Text Society, and by Goujet, De Déguilleville.

made in English more than two hundred years before Bunyan, and it may very well be that a story so popular and so striking may have been floated down with the current of country traditions, even after the rude English verses had passed out of men's memories.

De Guilleville was a monk of the Cistercian Order (1295–1358). His book is called the "Roman des trois Pelerinages." The first of these represents the Pilgrim inflamed with a desire of travelling to the Heavenly Jerusalem. In a mirror he has a vision of the city. The gate that bars the road is guarded by angels who keep off the unworthy. Grace de Dieu, a lady of exquisite beauty, guides the Pilgrim to her house, where she instructs him, baptizes him, and confirms him. He receives the Eucharistic bread, and is presented with the scarf and the staff; he is girt with the girdle of Justice, and receives those writings containing professions of Faith. He is then armed with cuirass, helmet, buckler, sword, spear, but finding himself cumbered with all this harness, he begs leave to put them off, and arms himself instead only with David's sling and the five pebbles that David employed against Goliath. He then starts. Great dangers meet him. All the passions, personified, stand across his path. Reason and Grace de Dieu constantly help him. Tribulation gets him down; he is assailed by Avarice, Heresy, and Satan; he is led astray by Fortune, and takes refuge in a convent, where he finds Discipline, Abstinence, Poverty, Charity, and Obedience. The convent, badly guarded, is assailed by enemies. At last he meets Infirmity, who seizes him, and Death, who strikes him down.

The leading ideas, it is seen, are exactly the same as in Bunyan's book. The way to life leads along a road beset with numberless dangers, from all of which he is rescued by the servants of God. Death comes at last, not as Bunyan's higher fancy painted it, in the shape of a cold river which must be passed, but in the commoner image of an armed figure with a scythe. And the whole is under the semblance of a dream, from which Bunyan wakes when the phantoms of his brain have crossed the stream, and De Guilleville when the cold scythe of Death cuts his Pilgrim down.

"La Mort laissa sa faulx courir,
Et me fist du corps départir,
Ce me sembla, en ce moment,
Si que de l'espouvantement
Esveillé et desdormy fû,
Et me trouvay si esperdu
Qu'aviser[1] je ne me povoie
Se ja[2] mort ou en vie j'estoie,
Jusqu'à tant que j'ouy sonner
L'orloge[3] de nuyt pour lever:
Et aussi lors chantoient les coqs."

In the gradual changes of a language it is impossible to draw a line of demarcation between the old and the new. We shall see how the Langue d' Oil of Marie de France and of Chrestien de Troyes was by the time of Froissart altered so as to be hardly recognisable as the same tongue. We shall see archaisms in the later poets, and traces of old forms and idioms even in the writings of the great Maître Clément. Still, speaking roughly, we may take the fifteenth

[1] aviser, perceive. [2] jà, jam. [3] orloge, horologe.

century as the first of French poetry. In all literature there are three great periods; the first, when a thing has to be said, and when it gets itself said with what readiness it may —a period of matter without style. In the second, men have become artists in words, they affect precision in style, and aim at ingenious forms and collocations of idioms: and they sacrifice the thought they wish to express to the manner of expressing it. It is in the third period only that thought and style become wedded to each other, so that neither intrudes in the other's place, or occupies an undue importance.

Thus the tale of Aristotle by Rutebeuf is an example of the first kind, where the poet goes straight on artlessly rhyming his philosophy and his story with very small consideration as to style.

Of the second kind we have examples in the tribe of poetasters like Meschinot, Molinet, and Cretin; in the Euphuists of England; in the Ciceronian pedants of Italy, whose aim was solely at style, and whose thought is lost in affectation and pedantry. The fifteenth century was much infected with this evil, but even in the most inveterate of offenders it is not rare to light upon passages of real beauty and poetic grace.

One word before going on to the fifteenth century. France has the merit of being the foster-mother of the imagination of two nations, England and Italy. From France Chaucer learned how to sing: much as he owed to Petrarch and to Italy, he owed more to France.[1] Dante, and the master of Dante, disputed before the University

[1] See Prof. Morley's "English Writers before Chaucer," p. 770.

of Paris. And the influence of the Provençal poetry on the precursors of Dante has been clearly marked and set forth. Thus the story of Griselda, told by Boccacio and by Chaucer, is found in a fabliau.

Only this difference exists. In Italy the seed sown by France fell upon soil fertile in genius. Dante, Petrarch, Boccacio, fixed the Italian language, while French and English were changing from year to year. No great genius arose in England between Chaucer and Spenser, and none at all in France before Molière and Corneille. Literature of the popular kind alone will not save a language from change and decay, nor, indeed, will writing of the very highest order. But when the words of a Shakespeare become household proverbs, when generation after generation finds delight in the nimble fancy of a man who reads all hearts like a printed book, the change is gradual and longer. We talk and write now much as Shakespeare and Ben Jonson talked and wrote, but we do not talk or write like John Lydgate or Skelton.

Under all its aspects, political, social, religious, and literary, the fifteenth is the most interesting of the Christian centuries. Perhaps, had we sufficient information, the age which saw the break-up of Roman manners and institutions, and the growth of feudalism, would be the one exception. But with the fifteenth, we have the fullest possible acquaintance. Chronicles, letters, histories, biographies, satires, and plays exist which tell us its story to the minutest particulars. We know not only the events but the actors as they lived, spoke, and appeared. The end of the old order was at hand, and the birth of a new. Chivalry and

feudalism were grievously shorn and mutilated, the Church was about to lose her fairest possessions, the thought of man was emancipated, learning burst like a flood over all Western Europe, scholasticism fell, and the unknown half of the world was open for the enterprise of nations. Politically—for with France alone we have to do—the century began with dire disaster and disgrace; for thirty years the country was held by foreign garrisons and a foreign king; and the triumphs of the French arms in the expulsion of the English could not compensate for the miseries of the protracted war. What these miseries were may be imagined from the account of a traveller through France. He says that from walled town to walled town there was not standing a house or a cottage, that the road-sides were lined with thickets and forest, whence issued ferocious wolves who attacked the passers-by; and that all the country people were either killed or had taken refuge in the towns. It takes long for a country to recover from such disasters as these, and France for the next three reigns was weak and almost powerless. The strength of the lesser nobles was wholly gone, never to be recovered, and Azincour, with its following of battles, sieges, and skirmishes, did for France what, with Wakefield, Barnet, and Tewkesbury, it did for England. Then was strengthened that bourgeois spirit, destined to play a great part in the history of France. For the towns, cut off and isolated by desolation, dependent no longer on their ruined seigneurs, had to look to themselves for their own safety. There arose from the common instinct of self-preservation, bonds of union which united the townsfolk more closely than the walls of their city, and patriotism

for France was metamorphosed into a burning zeal for the safety and welfare of the town. The town of Cahors, for instance, the birthplace of Clément Marot, would not allow their spiritual and temporal lord, the Bishop, to enter within the walls until he had sworn twice to respect the laws and privileges of the town. Little by little they extorted one concession after another from successive Bishops, till, in the eyes of the age, they obtained perfect liberty. There was even a bourgeois nobility, the representatives of which were not the less traders and merchants. The town had to work hard, all the citizens belonging to some trade or guild, but they had their fêtes and days of holiday. Then came the masks and mysteries, the time of rough bear play and practical jokes; of Roger Bontemps and his rude wit. Then they sang their songs—songs lasted longer in those days than at present—to the old tunes that they all knew so well, from grandfather to grandson. And the same refrain was heard from year to year:

"Y avoit trois filles
Toutes trois d'un grand,
Disoient l'une à l'autre—
Je n'ay point d'amant.
Et hé! hé!
Vague la galée;
Donnez lui du vent."

We shall see of what kind the bourgeois amusements were when we come to Coquillart and Roger de Collerye.

The astute Louis XI. perceived the great use that might be made of the citizens, and from his day, with alternations of good and bad times, they steadily increased in importance and power. That they were gross and coarse in manners

was natural in a body of artisans; and that they did not so rapidly gain influence in France as in England is due mainly to the great success and wealth of the English merchants compared with the French.

It is hard to realise, when one reads of the calamities and disasters of those days, how life was even tolerable. But we forget the spaces of time between events. Plagues came and decimated towns, conquerors came and sacked them, fires burned them down, kings pillaged them by taxation. Still, how many plagues came upon one town? how often was it sacked, burnt, pillaged? Generation after generation passed away in peace and plenty, and there are towns in France which have never, to this day, suffered heavily from war, famine, or pestilence. Even in the bitter times of the English, few towns but escaped with a timely submission, and probably the fury of war was felt more among the poor creatures who tilled the field than the smiths who forged the sword.

For the better class, the choice of professions was only a little more limited than it is at this day. Men could enter the church or put on the robe. The former was the better for ambitious minds, the latter, probably, for those who cared more for money than position. Readers of Rabelais and the Arrêts d'Amour will gather readily enough that law was then even more technical, dry, and pedantic than it is at present. As for the Church, it was no longer the refuge of piety but the school of promotion. Doubtless there were good, humble, single-minded priests in those days as in all others, but in the course of my reading I have met with none—except the one example of Bishop

Octavien de Saint Gelais, and he was only a repentant prodigal—and, which is worse, I have met with no hint or sign or trace that there were any. Was faith in its proper sense dead in those times? It would seem almost as if it were. There were, as always, men to preach terror to sinners, and men to sell them pardon; but the undisguised abuse, in the middle ages, of the Church, and the constant fruitless efforts to break the iron chain, shew something deeper than a mere protest against the impiety and iniquitous lives of Churchmen. And what a long list may be made of early reformers! Wyclyf, Huss, Savanarola, the Albigeois, Dolcino, and a crowd of others, all protested. Some were burnt, some got through by powerful protection; a few, such as St. Francis or St. Dominic, sought by a stricter rule of life to bring back an ideal state of simplicity and innocence. But in the course of ages a great mass of legendary belief had gradually grown up. To coarse and rude minds terror is the only law, and the only side of religion by which they could be approached was that which threatened tortures and despair for sins. Therefore the doctrine of Hell and Purgatory grew deeper into men's minds; the Christian religion became a sort of tariff, by which for such a sin such a penalty could be exacted, but which might be evaded by the goodness and clemency of the Church. We find, even in these days, this form of belief still existing. Still, utterly monstrous as it is, perhaps in its practical working it was no worse for rough minds than the Draconian law of our Puritans, not yet stamped out of our unwritten Articles.

The Reform was ripening through these centuries. In

the fifteenth the cry of indignation was louder and more persistent than in any preceding age. Coarse abuse preceded and accompanied the satire of Erasmus, and effected changes of thought where his delicate irony would have been powerless. It must be acknowledged that the Church of Rome before the Reformation, and that after it, are two things quite different in their popular aspects. There have been no Tetzels since the Reformation; a better succession of Popes followed, and the license of monks was effectively repressed. If the voice of the people was silenced, at least many of the abuses were repressed, and the Church began to recover her self-respect. Stated briefly, mediæval Catholicism was dying out of men's minds, and modern Catholicism slowly coming into existence. Reform, in that thorough spirit which led to separation, never found very deep root among the Latin races. Exceptional men were seen, like Coligny and a few others, but—it may be from the hereditary old Roman sense of unity and imperialism—the mass of the people, or the leading men of thought, neither contemplated nor would tolerate the idea of disruption.

Of what kind is this literature that we are about to consider? It must be remembered that there was, as yet, little of philosophy, though plenty of scholasticism, little of scholarship, little acquaintance with Latin and Greek historians, no acquaintance with the great poets of Greece, little with those of Rome. Literature had no high aims and no great models. It aimed as yet at amusing, and had little care for aught else. If a reflection occurred to the poet he put it down, but his reflections were generally singularly trite. He loved to sing of the spring and the green grass,

the summer flowers and the warbling of the birds. He was not intellectual, but sensuous. He knew nothing about hidden springs of action, nor cared to pry into the human heart. Robert Browning he would have burnt as an unintelligible sorcerer, Shelley for his Revolt of Islam, or for those parts which he could understand of it, would have been consigned to the Chastelet. The warmth of the sun expanded his soul and made him sing; and he sang, like the birds, to please his mate. Love, and the praise of love, are the only indication, as they were almost the only source, of his sense of beauty.

> "Corps feminin, qui tant est tendre,
> Polly, souef, si gracieux,"

was then, as always, the ideal of beauty and of grace. To be successful in love was his truest happiness, to be scorned his greatest misery. It is creditable that he[1] added to this entirely human sentiment the christian, or chivalrous, respect of women, which is the redeeming point in that early morality. Only occasionally he breaks out into some half passionate, half laughing protest against the coquetry and falseness of the fair sex; as when Charles asks where she is to be found who loves loyalty, or when Bishop Octavien de Saint Gelais says that *Monsieur vaut bien Madame.* A great deal of this was of course affectation, but it was that kind of affectation which distinguishes the savage from the civilized, which prevents us from fighting for the best bits at table, and from settling our disputes with the aid of the poker. If we

[1] That is, the knightly poet, not the bourgeois. This makes all the difference between Charles of Orleans and Coquillart—Saint Gelais and Villon.

may judge by the 'courts of Love' and their decisions, love-making was a most complicated and serious affair. The lady's heart was a fort which the lover had to assail by stratagem and by military tactics. And this feeling survived far down, almost to our own century. In the 'Précieuses Ridicules' of Molière, Madelon and Cathos are highly indignant at the downright fashion of their wooers. "La belle galanterie que la leur! Quoi! débuter d'abord par le mariage! .... ne faire l'amour qu'en faisant le contrat de mariage! et prendre justement le Roman par la queue!" There is a book by André Chapelain, written in the beginning of the thirteenth century, which is a sort of *locus classicus* on this subject. It is called "De arte amatoriâ et reprobatione amoris." I have not been able to see it, but it is said to contain the fullest information possible on the niceties of this study of love.

"The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly." Alas! how much then of my friends' verse is poetry? But the soul is many-sided; let me shew that one side only is painted, and my versifiers will be poets. Or, to take Leigh Hunt's definition—rather a wordy and clumsy one—"Poetry is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating the conception by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity." The craving for expression of thoughts which, if one can express them at all, must be sung and not said; the power of moving men's hearts by the delineation of scenes and events foreign to their experience; and the grace and beauty of the music of words in rhythm, to some men more delightful than the music of

instruments, have been, in all ages, the strongest impulses to the making of verse; and by the very nature of the impulse the verse must be graceful, illustrated by imagination and fancy, and varied in language. The remaining part of the definition cannot always be satisfied. The aiming at truth belongs to higher minds and more cultivated times; it has never, not even with Shakespeare, who was perhaps unconsciously truthful, reached to a higher point than in one or two poets of the present century; while power is itself an adjunct of truth, conscious and artistic, or unconscious and natural.

Let us confess at once that according to no possible definition of poetry is any one of my list of bards a poet. Villemain grants one poet only to the fifteenth century—Charles of Orleans. St. Beuve, by no means an enthusiastic critic, will have none. If Charles is to be accounted a poet, I contend also for Villon, and, if she be admitted at all, for Clotilde de Suiville. Mellin de St. Gelais and Marot belong to the first half of the sixteenth century.

With the first beginnings of the revival of learning grew up a great desire for the display of learning. Hence Chastellain's curious work in which Achilles has to apologize to Hector for his ill-treatment of him; hence the great number of works published in Latin as well as in French; hence the translations, imitations, and constant references to classical works; hence, too, the attention paid to verbal ingenuity, and the bad taste that characterized the tribe of versifiers under Charles the Eighth and Louis the Twelfth. We shall have to speak more in detail presently of these poetasters, ridiculed by Rabelais, who calls them *carilloneurs*

de cloches.[1] At present we must confine ourselves to their style. They were the inventors of numberless different modes of rhyming and of endless arrangements of their lines, and so long as they could conform to their own tasteless rules, paid little regard to the thought they wished to express. The Abbé Massieu in his little history of French poetry, published in 1739, gives some curious details about their forms of rhymes. "I shall not be afraid," he says, "to introduce here a portion of the puerilities which formed the delight of these poets. Their faults may be useful to us, and it is quite right that we should learn what they sought for with so much care, in order to avoid it ourselves."

These are the forms he gives, which I copy, with his illustrations.

"La Rime Batelée." This was when the end of the verse rhymed with the pause of the following verse:

"Quand Neptunus puissant Dieu de la *Mer*
Cessa d'armer Galéres et Vaisseaux."

"La Rime Fraternisée," when the last word of one verse was repeated, wholly or in part, at the beginning of the next line:

"Dieu Gard ma maitresse et *regente,*
Gente de corps et de *façon:*
Son cœur tient le mien dans sa *tente,*
Tant et plus en mortel frisson."

"La Rime Retrograde," when you could read the lines backwards, and still hear rhyme and metre. This must have been a most laborious style of writing. Here is a specimen:

[1] See note (2) at end of this chapter.

"Triomphamment cherchez honneur et prix,
Désolez, cœurs méchans, infortunez,
Terriblement estes moquez et pris."

Now backwards:

"Pris et moquez estes terriblement,
Infortunez, méchans cœurs, désolez,
Prix et honneur cherchez triomphamment."

"La Rime Enchaisnée," a simple alternating of the rhyme:

"Dieu des Amours, de mort me garde,
M'en gardant donne moi bonheur:
En me la donnant, prends ta Darde,
En la prenant, navre son cœur."

"La Rime Brisée," when the lines may be split up and read different ways. Thus:

"De cœur parfait chassez toute douleur,
Soyez soigneux, n'usez de nulle feinte,
Sans vilain fait entretenez douceur,
Vaillant et Pieux abandonnez la feinte."

Which may be read thus:

"De cœur parfait
Soyez soigneux.
Sans vilain fait
Vaillant et Pieux.
Chassez toute douleur
N'usez de nulle feinte,
Entretenez douceur,
Abandonnez la feinte."

"La Rime Equivoque," of which Guillaume Cretin was a great master, consists in repeating the last word or words of one line at the end of the next, but with a different signification. Thus:

"Peuples en paix te plaise *maintenir*,
Et envers nous si bien la *main tenir*,
Qu'aprés la vie ayons fin de *mort sentre*,
Pour éviter infernale *morsure*."

"La Rime Senée," when all the words of each verse began with the same letter:

"Ardent Amour, Adorable Angélique."

This has the merit at least of being easy, which is the principal reason why it was not generally followed.

"La Rime Couronnée," a double rhyme, a most ingenious invention, and highly poetical form. Other examples will be found of it in Chapter VIII.:

"Mer blanche colomb*elle d'elle*,
Je vais souvent pri*ant criant*,
Qui dessous la cord*elle belle*,
Me jette un œil *friand, riant*."

And the "Rime Empériére." This was Molinet's triumph. Look at it:

"Benins lecteurs, très dili*gens gens, gens*,
Prenez en gré mes impar*faits, faits, faits*."

Imperfect! Observe the modesty of the true poet.

They had, besides, verses of one syllable, two syllables, three syllables, and so on. They made their lines of unequal length, so as to form ovals, triangles, crosses, etc. Of this trifling we have examples in English verse.

But why revive the memories of these absurdities?

"In Literature"—I am quoting no less a writer than De Quincy—"not the weight of service done, or the power exerted, is sometimes considered chiefly—either of these must be very conspicuous before it will be considered at all

—but the splendour, or the notoriety, or the absurdity, or even the scandalousness of the circumstances surrounding the author."

Now we have to consider every one of these things, and more. But I wish to revive the memory of these obscure and forgotten authors for many other reasons, and chiefly for this: that the story of the Literature of France would be incomplete without them. Were all the English writings between Chaucer and Spenser hopelessly lost, our history would be little the worse; England took a gigantic leap in the age, so enthusiastic and *exalté*, of Elizabeth; and Shakespeare, king of all writers that ever lived, was the offspring of the time, and not of the foregone times. He owed nothing, absolutely nothing, except the incidents of a tale or two, to Lydgate, Skelton, and all the tribe of versifiers that preceded him. French literature took no such mighty leap into full growth. Slowly and continuously she grew in stature, and changed her robes from time to time as she outgrew them. But she was not transformed, and in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth, are clearly to be discerned the features of that of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Further, in these authors we read the spirit of the times, its religion and its social life. Very little things shew the change of national modes of thought. For instance, M. D'Hericault remarks that in the earlier times the image of the Blessed Virgin was that of a middle-aged woman, austere, and unlovely; in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries she grows younger, and is, as it were, "revêtue d'amour"; while in that troublous time of the fifteenth century when men

longed for authority and power, and prayed for a strong man, she became an empress:

> "Dame des cieux, régente terrienne,
> Empérière des infernaulx palux."

Or again, to quote the same author, we see in these poets "the characteristic side of the fifteenth century, the perturbation of moral sense, doubt on every side, a blinding of all consciences, hesitation among the most learned, mutability among the most deeply convinced, and confusion of the sincere conscience which sees everywhere nothing but fluctuating ideas, things corrupt, shameful, and disgraced."

And, lastly, the study of these writers is interesting and useful for this reason, that they represent the beginning of a new and the end of an old order. The Mahometan, expelled at one end of Europe, entered at another; a great kingdom rose in the west, and one fell in the east. Printing and the revival of Greek learning caused a revolution in scholarship; to east and west, across the ocean which till now had been the bounding river of the world, were opened out new lands, new fields of enterprise, new sources of wealth. Language became fixed, and the folk learned to find wisdom as well as amusement in books: and in the newly-printed works of Roman literature, students discovered how thought and language may be wedded, and of what mighty and deep things words are capable. It was not for threescore years and more that the dazzled minds of men could comprehend the splendour of the new order, nor was it till the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century that Shakespeare and Spenser and

Jonson; Ariosto, Tasso, Cervantes, Montaigne, Malherbe, spoke; that Drake, Pizarro, Cortes did mighty deeds; that Galileo, Descartes, and Tycho Brahe thought. Men at first, like children suddenly rushing from the dark school-room to the bright sunshine, could do nothing but dance about and shout.

Let this be a sufficient apology. My poets are all born before the sixteenth century, and are all tinged with some of the old spirit, except, perhaps, Mellin de Saint Gelais. They begin with Froissart, and end with Clément Marot. Of the great mass of verse writers who were contemporaneous with or followed immediately after Clément, I have not spoken. One or two of them deserve honour; most of them belong to the tribe of imitators.

With regard to the editions of the poets of whom I have undertaken to give an account, most of them have been reprinted, or printed for the first time, within the last fifty years. But there are a few—Christine de Pisan and Alain Chartier, for instance—who have never been printed or are inaccessible, and a mass of others, the great tribe of Molinet and Company, whose reputation is gone, and their works lost or only found in curious collections. With these I have been, perforce, content to get what selections I could, and to rely for the rest on the judgment of others. The descriptions of the allegorists, for instance, I owe almost wholly to Goujet's old book on French Literature. Michault and Martial de Paris have not, so far as I know, been reprinted of late years, the latest editions I have seen of them being upwards of a hundred years old. The rest are found in the Bibliothéque Elzevérienne, or are published singly by Messrs. P. L. Jacob, Ch. D'Hericault, Tarbé, etc.

A few things remain to be noted.

The University of Paris, to which so many of my poets belonged, was in its constitution something like what Oxford and Cambridge are now. It had its own rights, governors, privileges, and laws. It was independent of the town, it had colleges, scholarships, rectors, and lecturers; it formed a small nation of itself. Many of its students were horribly poor, like Villon, and seem to have got their living anyhow, from patrons, by begging, or by stealing. As for their course of studies, it was very limited. Latin was the only language they knew anything about, and theology the only study in which any interest was taken. Though the trivium and the quadrivium were still in vogue at the end of the fifteenth century, the University of Paris was at the head of European education.. It numbered 25000 scholars, and 5000 graduates.

The *Basoche* properly means the commonalty of the clerks of parliament and lawyers, who had a kind of jurisdiction between themselves. The Basochiens, envious of the success of the confrères de la Passion in their mysteries, formed a sort of dramatic company, and acted allegorical dramas. From them sprang another society called Les Enfants de Sans Souci. They discarded the gravity of allegory, and played what they called soties. These were a mixture of the old 'morality' and the modern farce, with a strong infusion of satire. Clément Marot is said to have belonged to this troop before becoming page to Monsieur de Neuville. Constant allusions are made in the literature of the time to these dramatic companies.

As for the form of our poetry, it consists of ballads,

chansons, rondeaux, tençons, lays, virelays, triolets, sirventes, dicts, and complaintes.

The ballad differed from the chanson only in having its refrain at the end of each verse. The rondeau generally consists of fifteen lines with only two rhymes; the first words of the first line are repeated in the ninth and the last line. The best specimens of this laboured and artificial form are certainly Clément Marot's. Examples of the rondeau will be found in the following pages.

The tençons were questions and answers on matters relating to the science of love, and were greatly in vogue at the time of the Cours d' Amour, 'les plaids et gieux sous l' orme.'

The triolet was another common form. This pretty little poem consisted of eight verses with two rhymes. The first two verses are repeated at the end to form a sort of refrain, and sometimes in the middle, for example:

"Le premier jour du mois de Mai
Fut le plus heureux de ma vie.
Le beau dessein que je formai
Le premier jour du mois de Mai!
Je vous vis et je vous aimai—
Si ce dessein vous plut, Sylvie,
Le premier jour du mois de Mai
Fut le plus heureux de ma vie."

Sirventes were generally gallant or satirical pieces with a kind of invocation: reverdies were little songs of spring time and love: chansons, lais, virelais, were different forms of songs, some with a refrain, and some without. The laws of these were altered from time to time.

My aim is to form an introduction to French poetry;

to shew by what means, and through what varying standards of taste the language of poetry came down to Boileau. With this object I have abstained from treating on the Langue d'Oil and the earlier versifiers, save in the brief examples given above; and I have considered that the best means of attaining my purpose was to take the poets singly —they have, as a rule, little connection with each other— and discuss their works and their genius. I begin with Jean Froissart, in whom many of the older forms and idioms are dropping out, and who is certainly the first that can be considered as having written in modern French—I include all the poets of the fifteenth century, and one or two of the early part of the sixteenth. And I conclude with Clément Marot, because, "on retrouve en lui la couleur de Villon, la gentillesse de Froissart, la delicatesse de Charles d'Orleans, le bon sens d'Alain Chartier, et la verve mordante de Jean de Meung." He sums up the middle ages; he heralds the new style; he is the last of the old poets in thought, and the first of the new in language.

With regard to the language of the fifteenth century, I do not think it necessary or desirable to enter into any detailed account of its peculiarities. Should I find time and opportunity, I propose a separate Treatise on the History and Formation of the Langue d'Oil. I hope there will be no difficulty in understanding the extracts which I have given; with a view to facilitate the reading, I have given brief foot notes. Words occur which have been lost, such as het—hilaritas; aie—aide; antan—ante annum; sade, sadinet—agreeable; mie—mica. Words are spelt differently, apuys is appui; poy is peu; karesme is

carême. These are always distinguishable. Grammatical forms are sometimes more difficult, thus: lairroy is laisserai; oy is ai; tiengne is tienne; querra is cherchera; tu ne congnois is tu ne connais pas; the pronoun is not indispensable, and is as often as not omitted; si is sic, while se is generally si; o is avec; soubs is sub; sus is super; luy, moy, suys, ung, and such words explain themselves. One very simple rule is that, whenever a circumflex occurs in modern French there will be an *s* in old French. Thus, fête is feste.

NOTE I.

THE OATH OF LOUIS DE GERMANIQUE.

This is curious as shewing the state of the popular language in the ninth century. It is as follows:—

Pro Deo amur et pro christian poplo, et nostro commun salvament dist di in avant, in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat, si salvarai eo cist meon fradre Karlo et in adjudha, et in cadhuna cosa, si cum om per dreit son fradra Salvan dist, in o quid il mi altresi fazet, et ab Ludher nul plaid numquam prindrai, qui, meon vol, cist meon fradre Karlo in damno sit.

SERMENT DES SEIGNEURS FRANÇAIS, SUJETS DE CHARLES-LE-CHAUVE.

Si Lodhuwigs sagrament, que son frade Karlo jurat, conservat, et Karlus meos sendra de suo part non lo stanit, si io returnar non l'int pois, ne io ne neuls, cui eo returnar int pois, in nulla adjudha contra Lodhuwig nun li iner.

NOTE II.

RONSARD AND THE PLEIAD.

This curious movement sprang from the eagerness with which Classical literature was studied. Ronsard, himself an enthusiast in one direction as much as Malherbe subsequently in the opposite, initiated with others as zealous as himself, a sort of Perpetual Adoration of study. Their lamp was never extinguished, the work never stopped; and after years of labour they were prepared, not to improve the language, but to remodel it altogether. It seems ridiculous to us that one man, or one small body of men should propose to themselves this gigantic task, but so it was. The kind of language they tried to introduce is ridiculed by Rabelais. Pantagruel meets a Limousin scholar who informs him how they spend their time in Paris. "We transfretate the Sequane at the dilucul and crepuscul; we deambulate by the compites and quadrives of the urb; we despumate the Latial verbocination, and like verisimilary amorabons, we captat the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform, and omnigenal feminine sex. And if by fortune there be rarity, or penury of pecune in our marsupies, and that they be exhausted of ferruginean metal, for the shot we demit our codices, and oppignerat our vestiments, whilst we prestolate the coming of the Tabellaries from the Penates and patriotic Lares." To which Pantagruel answers—"What devilish language is this? by the Lord, I think thou art some kind of heretic."

CHAPTER I.

FROISSART—ALAIN CHARTIER—CHRISTINE DE PISAN —EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS.

IT is impossible of course to name any year, or any short period, when the Langue d'Oil changed into French. As, however, the child grows into the man, so the young language grows into the mature. Further, as children rejoice in tales of feats of arms, of wonders, of travels; as a young man's mind lightly turns to thoughts of love; as wisdom and reflection come with age, so French literature, which begins with those wonderful old contes et fabliaux, where Alexander and Hector are knights; where Aristotle, overcome by love, consents to carry a lady sitting on his back, as if he were an ass; where love has all its grossness, but none of its passion; where the thing to be said is plainly said without the veil of decency and the assistance of the imagination; where fact and fancy are mixed up in that delicious and dreamlike mess, which children love:— goes on to the reign of Love, when poetry becomes a collection of songs and ballads all on one theme; and, tired at last of this, drops down into the quiet maturity of life, when it has acquired knowledge, suffered enough

to learn wisdom, and, being now practised in speaking, begins to speak to some purpose. Rutebeuf, Charles of Orleans, and Boileau, may be taken as representative men of the three stages. We are chiefly concerned with the middle period, when the child was become a young man, the teller of stories a singer of love songs.

I cannot find any fitter man to commence this middle period than Jean Froissart. He is known, chiefly, of course, by his Chronicles, but he was the author of a great quantity of verses. These, which are spirited and graceful, shew in their language a great advance on the lines of Gaston de Foix or Thibault de Champagne. In this example, however, the language is modernized:

"Le corps s'en va, mais le cœur vous demeure;
Très chère dame, adieu jusqu'au retour.
Trop me sera lointaine ma demeure.
Le corps s'en va, mais le cœur vous demeure,
Très chère dame, adieu jusqu'au retour.
Mais doux penser que j'aurai à toute heure,
Adoucira grant part de ma doulour.
Très chère dame, adieu jusqu'au retour;
Le corps s'en va, mais le cœur vous demeure."

Most of his pieces are in a similar strain. Here is one lighter and more musical:

"On dit que j'ay bien manière
D'estre orguillousette:
Bien afiert[1] à estre fière
Jeune pucelette.
Hier matin me levay
Droit à la journée,
En un jardinet entray
Dessus la rousee.

[1] affiert, it is becoming.

Je cuyday[1] estre première
Au clos sur l'herbette:
Mais mon doux amy y ere,
Cueillant la flourette.
On dit que j'ay bien manière
D'estre orguillousette:
Bien afiert à estre fière
Jeune pucelette.
Un chappelet ly donnai,
Fait à la vesprée:
Il le prist, bon grè l'en say,
Puis m'a appellée:
Veuillez ouir ma prière,
Très belle et doucette:
Un petit plus que n'afiere
Vous m'estes durette.
On dit que j'ay bien manière
D'estre orguillousette:
Bien afiert à estre fière
Jeune pucelette."

The name of Alain Chartier, once the most famous poet of his age, has wellnigh died out of the memory of man.

"Le bien disant en rhythme et prose, Alain,"

rests in obscurity in his unpublished manuscripts. Like others of his time, he is lost by the very magnitude of his works; they are too big to be printed, save at the expense of a nation, and too voluminous for any single man to hope to get through them.

Alain Chartier was born about 1386, and died about 1458. An attempt has been made to prove him of honourable descent, but on this point we may afford to be indifferent. He was secretary to Charles the Sixth, and,

[1] cuyday, thought.

after his death, to Charles the Seventh, and held other appointments. He is said to have been the ugliest man in France. One day, Margaret, wife of the Dauphin, afterwards Louis the Eleventh, finding him sleeping in a hall, kissed him before her attendants, saying, "It is not the man whom I have kissed, but the mouth out of which *sont issus tant d'excellents propos, matières graves, et paroles élégantes.*"

His poetical works, which have not been reprinted since 1617, consist of *Le Debat du Reveil Matin: la belle Dame sans mercy: le Lay de Paix: le Bréviaire des Nobles: le Livre des Quatre Dames*, and others. The language is greatly indebted to Chartier. He was the first who wrote with facility, using rhymes interlaced and doubled, instead of the old couplet rhyme. His facility spoiled him as a poet, the extracts which I have seen of him showing more ease than art, and more command of language than originality of thought. He was happy in gaining a reputation during his life which did not die with him. For the next hundred years he was recognised as the real founder of modern French poetry. Goujet collects together a number of eulogistic notices of him. Clément Marot says:

"En Maistre Alain Normandie prend gloire,

The anonymous author of the Art of Rhetoric says:

"Par Maistre Alain à qui Dieu pardon face,
Cest art ici monstre et vérifie."

And Octavien de Saint Gelais:

"Je, peu après visitant ce quartier,
Vis un Poëte hault et scientifique.

Hélas! c'etoit feu Maistre Alain Chartier,
Doux en ses faicts, et plein de Rhétorique,
Clerc excellent, orateur magnifique,
Comme l'on peut par ses dicts tesmoigner,
Art si très bien l'apprint à besongner,
Qu'oncques Vulcan mieux n'ouvra sur l'enclume,
Que cestuy fist de papier et de plume."

His book, *des Quatre Dames*, is styled by Goujet the most supportable of Alain Chartier's poems. In it four ladies, who have lost their lovers on the day of Azincourt, lament their misfortunes. One, certain of the death of her lover, extols his virtues, and is almost in despair; the second has heard that hers is taken prisoner; the third considers herself more unhappy than the others because she has heard no news at all of hers; while the fourth claims the preeminence of misfortune. Her friends have lost their lovers honourably; one is dead, one is a prisoner, one may perhaps return, not ingloriously,—but for her, her lover is a coward, he fled from the fatal field, and she would rather have him dead than dishonoured.

The following "Idylle" I extract from the collection of Auguis. He goes forth one fine spring morning to forget his melancholy. It is almost unnecessary to explain that his melancholy was caused by love, and that it was the normal state of all poets and knights, especially, one would say, if they were so ugly as Alain Chartier. One remembers when Don Quixote insisted on being left in the mountains to indulge undisturbed in the freaks of melancholy and lover's madness. Chartier did much the same.

"Tout autour oiseaux voletoient,
Et si très doucement chantoient,

Qu'il n'est cœur qui n'en fût joyeux;
Et en chantant en l'air montoient,
Et puis l'un l'autre surmontoient
À l'estrivée à qui mieux mieux.
Le temps n'estoit mie[1] nueux
De bleu estoient vestus les cieux,
Et le beau soleil cler luisoit.
Violettes croissoient par lieux,
Et tout faisoit ses devoirs, tieux
Comme nature le duisoit.

Oiseaux en buissons s'assembloient:
L'un chantoit, les autres doubloient
Leurs gorgettes, qui verboyoient
Le chant que nature a appris,
Et puis l'un de l'autre s'embloient,
Et point un s'entre-ressembloient:
Tant en y eut, que ilz sembloient,
Fors à estre en nombre compris.
Les arbres regarday flourir,
Et lievres et lapins courir.
Du printemps tout s'esjouissoit.
Là sembloit amour seignourir,
Nul n'y peut vieillir, ni mourir,
Ce me semble, tant qu'il y soit . . . .

Si disoie à Amours: "Amours,
Pourquoi me fais tu vivre en plours,
Et passer tristement mes jours,
Quand tu donnes par tout plaisance?"

Spring, Love, Joy, Winter, Sorrow, and Old Age—these are the stock subjects of the old writers; when these fail, we can at least betake ourselves to giving good advice. Here is some. It is in a ballad, of which the refrain is "Vous n'aviez rien quand vous fustes nez."

[1] mie, Lat. mica, ne mie, not at all.

"O fols du fols, et les fols mortels hommes,
Qui vous fiez tant ez biens de fortune,
En celle terre, et pays où nous sommes,
Y avez vous de chose propre aucune?
Vous n'y avez chose vostre nesune,[1]
Fors les beaux dons de grace et de nature,
Si fortune donc par cas d'aventure,
Vous toult[2] les biens que vostres vous tenez
Tort ne vous fait, ainçois vous fait droiture.
Car vous n'aviez rien quand vous fustes nez.

Ne laissez plus le dormir à grands sommes[3]
En votre lit, par nuit obscure et brune,
Pour acquester richesses à grands sommes:
Ne convoitez choses dessous la lune,
Ni de Paris jusques à Pampelune,
Fors ce qu'il faut sans plus à créature,
Pour recouvrer sa simple nourriture.
Souffise-vous d'estre bien renommez,
Et d'emporter bon loz en sépulture:
Car vous n'aviez rien quand vous fustes nez.

Les joyeux fruits des arbres, et les pommes,
Au temps que fut toute chose commune,
Le beau miel, les glandes et les gommes
Souffisoient bien à chascun, à chascune:
Et pour ce fut sans noise[4] et sans rancune.
Soyez contents de chauld et de froidure,
Et ne prenez fortune douce et sure:
Pour vos pertes enfin dueil ne menez,
Fors à raison, à point, et à mesure:
Car vous n'aviez rien quand vous fustes nez.

ENVOI.

Si fortune vous fait aucune injure,
C'est de son droit, jà ne l'en reprenez,
Perdissiez-vous jusques à la vesture:
Car vous n'aviez rien quand vous fustes nez."

[1] nesune, ne ipsum unum, not even one. [2] toult, tollit.
[3] somme, somnus. [4] noise, quarrel.

Contemporaneous with Alain was Christine de Pisan.

> 'D'avoir le pris en science et doctrine,
> Bien merita de Pisan la Christine
> Durant ses jours."

Let us not think that the life of the professed litterateur is a thing wholly of modern times. Men have lived on the fruit of their brains in all ages. When there was no public, there were patrons. Marie de France enjoyed the liberality of Henry the Third of England, Alain Chartier found Charles the Seventh, and Christine de Pisan Henry the Fourth and Charles the Sixth.

It is difficult to understand how, in those days, a poet grew popular; how he multiplied copies of his works, and was, so to speak, published and reviewed. There were no slaves, as in Rome, employed in copying for the booksellers and librarians; the monasteries, one is accustomed to think, were at this time still chiefly employed in effacing the classic trumpery of Livy and Virgil, in order to make room for the lives of the saints; there was no demand for books, no booksellers, no body of people who could read. On the other hand, all could listen. If the poet sent one copy to his patron it was probably the only one he made. And as the patron in general liked to be read to rather than to read, one copy was sufficient for him and his house.

Thomas de Pisan, astrologer to king Charles the Fifth of France, left Italy in 1368, taking with him his little daughter Christine for the French court. Whatever knowledge could in those days be got at was put into the head of the little girl, who grew up a prodigy of knowledge and cleverness. At the age of fifteen she was married to

Étienne du Castel, a gentleman of Picardy. Both father and husband died before she was twenty-five, and she was left almost destitute, with three children. She did what a clever woman of the present day would try to do—she had recourse to her pen, and wrote verses for the support of her little ones. During a long life—she did not die till 1431—she maintained herself by writing, getting a good deal of success, but very little money. The Earl of Salisbury, who came to France on the occasion of the marriage of Isabella of Valois to Richard the Second, adopted her son and took him to England; and on his fall, Henry the Fourth, reading a collection of her poems, entreated her to make his court the place of her residence. This offer she refused. A similar offer, made her by the Duke of Milan, Galeas Visconti, met with the same answer. Philip, Duke of Burgundy, took care of her son when the youth returned from England, and engaged her to write "le livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du sage roy Charles." Charles the Sixth in 1411 made her a present of 200 livres, which must have been a most welcome godsend to the poor poetess.

There exist two portraits of Christine de Pisan; one in the manuscript in the Imperial Library at Paris, and one in the Harleian manuscript in the British Museum. The latter has been engraved and coloured in Shaw's "Dresses and Decorations of the Middle Ages."

Here is a ballad complaining of her lonely condition. I give one verse:

"Seulette suis et seulette veuil estre,
Seulette m'a mon doulx ami laissiée,

Seulette suis sans compagnon ne maitre,
Seulette suis dolente et courrouciée,
Seulette suis en languour maisaissié,
Seulette suis plus que nulle esgarée,
Seulette suis sans ami demourée."

Here are some of the "Dicts moraulx" for her son:

"Fils, je n'ai mie[1] grand trésor
Pour t'enrichir. Mais au lieu d'or,
Aucuns enseignements montrer,
Te veuil, si les veuilles noter.

Dès ta jeunesse pure et monde,
Apprends à cognoitre le monde
Si que tu puisses par appendre
Garder en tous cas de mesprendre.

Se as bon maistre, sers le bien,
Dys bien de lui, garde le sien,
Son secret scelles, quoi qu'il fasse,
Soyes humble devant sa face.

Trop convoiteux ne soyes mye,
Car convoitise est ennemye
De chasteté et de sagesse,
Te garde aussy de foll' largesse.

Se tu as estat ou office,
Dont tu te mêles de justice,
Garde comment tu jugeras,
Car devant le grant juge iras.

Tiens toi à table honestement,
Et t'habilles de vestement
En tel atour qu'on ne s'en mocque:
Car on cognoist l'œuf à la coque.

Ayes pitié des pauvres gens
Que tu voys nuz et indigens,
Et leur aydes quant tu porras;
Souviengne toy que tu morras.

[1] mie (see note, p. 47). It occurs very frequently.

Ne soyes decepveur de femmes,
Honoure les, ne les diffames,
Souffise toi d'en amer une,
Et ne prends cointance à chacune."

NOTE.—Eustache Deschamps may perhaps be considered as belonging to this early school of poets. He died very early in the fifteenth century. He was a mighty traveller, visiting Egypt and Syria, and for some time being a captive in the hands of the Saracens. He served Charles the Fifth and Charles the Sixth; was pillaged by the English, and wrote ballads against them. His works, which are voluminous, have been republished by M. Tarbé, with a notice of his life, and a criticism, chiefly eulogistic, of his poems. I subjoin one or two specimens. This is satirical.

"Franche Dogue," dist un Anglois,
"Vous ne faictes que boire vin."
"Si faisons bien."—dict le François—
"Mais vous buvez le lunequin.
Roux estes comme pel de mastin.
Willequot, de moy apprenez,
Quand vous yrez par chemin,
Levez vostre queue, levez."

"Vous n'estres pas de membres fais
Comme est Jacques Thommelin,
Qui porte si merveilleux fais
Que vous n'y pourriez mettre fin:
Ce sont deux tonneaux de despin,
C'est voir, et la queue de lèz.
Advisez vous," dist Franchequin,
Levez vostre queue, levez."

Here is a Rondeau:

"Beau fait aler au chastel de Clermont;
Car belle y a et douce compaignie,
Qui en dançant et chantant s'esbanye.
Les dames là très bonne chère font
Aux estrangiers. Si convien que je dye:
Beau fait aler au chastel de Clermont.

Une en y a qui les autres semont
En toute honour et en pyeuse vie.
C'est paradis: et pour ce à tous escrie:
Beau fait aler au chastel de Clermont:
Car belle y a et donce compaignie."

Here is a prophecy, as yet unfulfilled:

"Franc et Escot, li ancien Breton,
Les fils de Bruth et toute leur lignie,
En un conflit feront crier leur nom,
Et là sera une bataille establie.
Du sang des morts de chascuns partie
Fleuves courront: et véritablement
Les fils de Bruth mourront là à tourment,
Et dès ce jour n'ont espoir de mercy.
Destruiz seront: c'est leur définiment;
Tant qu'on dira—Angleterre fut cy."

Professor Morley suggests that perhaps Chaucer took the hint of his 'Flower and the Leaf' from a poem of Deschamps, in which he compares the flower and the leaf. He finds however a resemblance in the beginning of Chaucer's poem to the 'Dit de Vergier' of Machault, and in the end to the 'Lai du Trot' of Hélinaud.

Deschamps has two Ballads on the death of Machault, or Machau, as his name is sometimes spelt. I cannot, in the brief space of a note, do justice to these early poets. Deschamps, in particular, is worthy of careful study. His ballads were published at Reims in 1849, and his 'Miroir de Mariage' in 1865.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLES OF ORLEANS.

In the pleasant month of May, anno Domini 1391, there was great rejoicing in the Hôtel St. Pol, at Paris, where Valentine, wife of Louis Duke of Orleans, had presented her husband with a fair young son. In the same month the child was baptized, taking the name of Charles, and having for one of his godfathers the very same Duke of Burgundy who afterwards was the murderer of his father. The child was carefully reared and instructed by his mother, from whom he probably inherited that delicacy of thought and expression in which he excels all his contemporaries. At the usual age of seven he was taken from the hands of the women, and put under proper instruction in order to be made, what his tutors succeeded in making him, the most gallant knight and most accomplished gentleman of his own time.

Again, in the year 1396, there was a splendid royal marriage in London. Richard the Second took a second wife, Isabella of Valois, unto himself. She was only eight years old, and after the ceremony was taken back to her

nurses and governesses. Three years later came her luckless husband's deposition and death, after which, a widow of eleven, she returned to France and put herself under the the protection of Louis, Duke of Orleans. Efforts were made by Henry IV. to obtain the hand of Isabella for his son, the Prince of Wales, but she would have none of him. It is said that he even offered to abdicate in favour of his son, if she would marry him, but in vain. Then it was that the Duke of Orleans bethought him of his own son Charles, and though he was three years younger than the bride, only fifteen years old, and of lower rank than the Ex-Queen of England, and, in spite of the tears of Isabella, the betrothal was celebrated with the utmost splendour in 1406, and the marriage in 1409. It is said that the tears of the bride were soon dried, and that the union, so long as it lasted, was perfectly happy. She died in 1410, only twenty-one years of age.

Meantime, grave events had happened in the Orleans family. In 1407, on that fatal eve of St. Clement, Louis was assassinated by order of the Duke of Burgundy; Valentine, finding the royal authority powerless to punish so illustrious a criminal, died of a broken heart; and Charles at the age of seventeen was the head of the family, with the duty before him of avenging his father's murder. To strengthen himself, on the death of Isabella, he married Bona, daughter of the Count of Armagnac, and in the factious war which followed, he naturally belonged to the Armagnac side. Then came the most evil day that ever broke for France, the day of Azincourt. On the evening of the battle, an English esquire named Richard Waller, going round the

heaps of slain, came upon the body, almost lifeless, of Charles of Orleans. In the midst of the misfortunes that befel France, this capture was but one additional blow, and, without hope, for the time, of ransom, Charles was carried off to England. Full particulars of his imprisonment are found in letters and papers of the time. He was a captive for twenty-five years, being kept at Windsor, at Bolingbroke, at London, at Wingfield, and lastly at Calais. Many different efforts were made to procure his release, but it was not till 1440 that it was actually effected at the Conference of Gravelines. The price paid was a hundred and twenty thousand crowns of gold. His return was the signal for a grand national fête. The Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, was the provider of the money; partly, let us hope, in atonement for the murder of Louis.

Among the papers extant relative to his imprisonment there is the following letter from Sir Reynold Cobham. In the original it is in the Anglo-French of the English court.

"To the King our Sovereign Lord and the other Lords of his most wise Council.

"The humble petition of Reynold Cobham, knight—That, as our aforesaid Sovereign Lord, by the advice of his aforesaid Council, by his letters of privy seal dated the 12th day of June last, committed to the said petitioner the Duke of Orleans for safe custody, at the same daily rate of payment, so long as the said Duke should be in his care, as the Earl of Suffolk had taken for the cause aforesaid. And since, O sovereign Lord, the said petitioner has not had from the said 12th of June any payment for the aforesaid guard, please your sovereign Lordship, by the

advice of your said Council, to consider the great charges and cost that the said petitioner has by reason of the aforesaid guard, and therefore to grant letters of privy seal directed to the treasury of England, to pay to the said petitioner that which is owing to him during the time that the said Duke has been and will be in his keeping, etc."

The charge of maintaining the royal captive was fixed at 300 marks yearly, but as the treasury was very low, the Earl of Suffolk undertook to do it for "quatorze sols et quatre deniers par jour." Considering that this expense went on for five-and-twenty years, it does not appear that Charles's ransom was very exorbitant.

His misfortunes ended with his return to France. He married a third time in 1440, with Marie of Cleves, niece of the Duke of Burgundy. Great rejoicings took place at this event, which effectually reunited the houses, and a special chapter of the Order of the Golden Fleece was held to receive the returned exile. After this the newly married pair went on a sort of triumphal tour through France, in which they received so many tokens of popular favour that the king became jealous, and refused to receive Charles, unless he came alone, or with a less numerous following. Thereupon he retired in some disgust to his castle at Blois. His royal cousin's jealousy, however, did not prevent Charles from interfering in his behalf with the Duke of Burgundy and the discontented nobles, for which he received the thanks of the king. An unsuccessful attempt to get the succession of Milan, through his mother Valentine, was the last political effort of Charles. After his return from Italy he retired to his castle at Blois, and gave himself

up entirely to the cultivation of poetry. His residence was the home of all the minstrels, trouvères, and bards in France; he, the best poet of all, befriended all poets; he gave an impulse to letters in France that was felt far into the next century, and the immense literary activity of his own age and that immediately following is, doubtless, greatly due to his encouragement, help, and example. He died in 1465, of grief, it is said, on account of the reproaches and injurious suspicions of king Louis XI. "Thus," says his biographer, "no calamity is wanting in the life of the Duke of Orleans. Born in a rank, and with natural inclinations capable of conquering fortune, he is yet almost always unfortunate and persecuted; he dies of grief, and his memory, pursued beyond the tomb by the cruel power of Louis XI., falls into oblivion for two centuries." For neither in the next age, nor in the age that followed, was there any further mention of the luckless Charles, save as a prisoner in England, and one of the children of France. It was not till 1734 that the Abbé Sallier, keeper of the maunscripts of the king, came upon his poetry, and let the world know that it had one more neglected poet; a poet of whom Villemain says that he is the only one of the fifteenth century; that his is the first work that appeared in France, in which the imagination is correct and simple, and in which there is found an elegance of style almost premature.

His poems are found in several manuscripts; of these the most important is that of Grenoble: it is mainly from this that the modern and complete edition of Charles, by M. Champollion Figeac, has been taken. Memoirs and notices of Charles have been made by Sallier, Goujet, Auguis, and Villemain.

Three distinct periods are to be traced in his verses. The first, in which he celebrates the beauty of his mistress, probably Bona, his second wife, his love, and her death; the second, in which he laments the state of France, and his own captivity, and longs for his return; and the third, in which, returned and married again, he presides over his poetic court at Blois, entertains his friends, proposes subjects for their verse, and contests with the peaceful weapons of pen and lute. Here came bards of every degree, from the king of Sicily to Villon, if, indeed, as M. Champollion Figeac asserts, Villon was ever a guest of Charles.

Charles surpassed them all. "Il serait difficile,"—I quote M. Champollion Figeac—"de citer un seul de ses vers condamnable pour une expression qui ne serait pas d'une exquise délicatesse, du language le plus épuré, sans afféterie, digne enfin de ce personnage et de la position éminente qu'il occupait dans l'état."

"On remarquera," says Villemain, "que l'expression de Charles d'Orleans est ingenue, familière, sans avois jamais rien de bas. C'est sa grande supériorité que Villon.... Il y a dans Charles d'Orleans un bon goût d'aristocratic chevaleresque, et cette élégance de tour, cette fine plaisanterie sur soi même, qui semble n'appartenir qu'à des époques très cultivées." And in another place he says that, in his poems we find "those expressions which have no date, and which, being always new, do not pass from the tongue and the memory of the people."

I venture to suggest that the entire oblivion into which Charles's works fell was due to the invention of printing. The first book printed in Paris was in 1469. It was an age

in which everybody of any cultivation wrote; further, most men belonged to a sort of mutual admiration society, and were bound to magnify each other. There were at first, excluding theology, two great fields of labour for the French press; the publication of Classical Literature, and that of the effusions of living authors. An immense number of romances, poems, ballads, and rhymes of all sorts, issued from the press in France during the first fifty years of printing.[1] But, just as men know least of that period of history which immediately precedes their own recollection, so students in the time of the renaissance knew least of the time, to them so dark, that came before the great outburst at the end of the fifteenth century. Charles was the most graceful of his school, but he was of the old school; Charles would have scorned the verbal ingenuity of Molinet and Cretin, but he lacked their modern spirit; and if he was the best poet of the fifteenth century, it must be owned that he partook of a good deal of the spirit of the fourteenth. He was the first poet of modern French (his language is easier to read than that of Lydgate in English, for example), but he was also the last of the trouvères. Perhaps at his death the displeasure of Louis XI. would have made men shrink from proclaiming his poetical merits, but Louis XI. lived only eighteen years later, and his own son Louis, afterwards twelfth king of that name, might, had he pleased, have given his father as much popularity as the nature of his works permitted. This he did not do, although he collected the poems in one manuscript, because their time had passed. Allegory still held its ground, but

[1] The number of books printed at Paris up to 1500 was 751.

it was allegory in worse taste, and in more elaborate costume. Charles introduces us to Faux Dangier, Bel Accueil, Soussy, and the rest of them, but he does not, like another and a later bard, make Reason present him with a pair of spectacles, engraven with the magic words Prudence and Justice on the glasses, through which he is to read dreary discourses from the book of Conscience. The taste of Charles's school was not that of the next generation, and his pure clear style was altogether opposite to the ingenious involutions of those who came after him. Moreover, the purity of Charles is not only that of style, but that of thought. I think he was too much of a prince to sully his pages with grossness. People in the rank of Villon, for instance, might do so if they pleased—for, in Charles's eyes, self-respect could only exist with nobility of blood. Indeed, his utter unconsciousness that a villain or a bourgeois could be capable of knightly virtues, though never put into words, breathes in every page of his poems: and that gradual rise of the middle class which first began in the fifteenth century, and which can be nowhere more clearly marked than in France, went on round him, his unconscious eyes seeing nothing of what was going to happen. Let us be charitable to Louis XI., that much maligned monarch, abused by the two greatest novelists of England and France, and by all the historians. Perhaps the astute king had some reason to be vexed when his chivalrous cousin, full of the most lofty sentiments, at once noble, royal, and conservative, *could* not see, with him, that on the fall of the great Duke depended the welfare of France, and that the days of chivalry were really past and gone;

the spirit having departed from the old forms in those bad days when Burgundian and Armagnac cut each other's throats in Paris, when Azincourt was fought, when France's life-blood was wellnigh drained in turning out the invaders, and when England was wellnigh destroyed in her long civil struggles.

A poet who would only see things through the poetic light shed by Apollo, god of the Sun as well as of Parnassus, who went about the Castle of Loyalty, led by Honour and Fidelity; who manfully defended his ramparts against the recreant Falsehood, with his minions, Treachery, Deceit, Misrepresentation, and Calumny; and who would have held to Truth, his mistress, though the whole world crumbled, must have been terribly aggravating to a crafty politician like Louis the Eleventh. No one, I believe, ever heard of Louis writing verses; wise princes do not write poetry. Richard the First was a great composer of songs, which he sang himself. Philip Augustus wrote none, though he encouraged poets by retaining a laureate 'on the establishment.' Richard ended badly. Charles of Orleans himself made a poor business of life, on the whole. Charles the Bold was a patron of letters, a melancholy example. Louis XII., also a patron of letters, was but a mediocre king, and unlucky in his wars. Francis the First furnishes a warning of the most dreadful kind to kings; and poor Mary Queen of Scots wrote the prettiest poems possible. In our own country Charles the Second rhymed prettily, with a certain lamentable freedom of thought, but William the Third is not known as a poet; and it is certain that none of the Georges had favour from the lyric muse. More

examples might be gathered from the pages of history; but let us grant at once that poetry and politics are by no means synonyms, and find some excuse for that unlucky scene where Louis lost his temper and abused the poor old Duke, then upwards of seventy years of age, in such round terms that he went home, took to his bed, and never got out of it again. And as for Louis's hostility preventing the publication of his poems and the increase of his reputation, I do not believe that Louis would have cared a farthing if all the poems his cousin had written—so harmless, so unpolitical—had run through twenty editions a-year. He was soon forgotten, because, first, as I have shewn, the invention of printing came twenty years too late for him; and, secondly, which is perhaps an equally good reason, because his reputation was confined to a very small circle, chiefly of well-born poets, and because, despising the people, he never wrote for them or of them.

It is difficult to make a selection from the poems of Charles. They are all quite short, and each generally contains some one concetto, gracefully turned, if sometimes quite trifling. The first impression they leave upon the reader is of a mind peculiarly neat and well ordered. Every thing is perfectly finished; there is no possibility of feeling that with a little more care any one stanza would be improved. Each line is polished *ad unguem*, and Charles must have been a most conscientious, careful, and painstaking writer. There is not much power in his poems, and one suspects more industry than genius. Such rules as he has he follows implicitly, and his own canons of taste he keeps inviolate. Tedium of the worst kind creeps over the

reader who perseveres too long at one sitting, but a little of him is not without a charm. This charm is difficult to explain. It does not arise from the correctness of his style, which is not always clear to us, owing to his archaïsms, nor from the interest we feel in his subjects; I think it is rather the unexpected refinement of his writing which attracts one. It is so unusual to find in an age generally supposed wholly gross, sentiments which seem to belong peculiarly to ourselves, that one reads on, allured by the novelty, and by the hope, continually gratified, of turning up some new sparkling little jewel of thought or phrase. But the grossness of French literature was not yet a thing to complain of. The *Contes* and *Fabliaux* belonged to the past; Rabelais, and the times of the later Valois kings, belong to the future. Between them come Charles, that gallant and unlucky knight; Christine, the virtuous and the prosy; Alain Chartier, with his 'beautiful' sentiments, admired by Queen Marguerite; and Villon, the repentant prodigal. Decidedly, the poetical literature of the fifteenth century was more moral than what had been before, or than what followed after.

Villemain reproaches Charles with coldness and want of patriotism. In the midst of the misfortunes of his country, he says, Charles only regrets his lost love, the pleasures that he can no more enjoy, the sunshine and the flowers of France. This is not wholly true, though true in part. It must be remembered that reality in poetry, save of the descriptive order, was not yet known. Charles's main theme was his love, imaginary or ideal, probably the latter, though the lady of his songs is generally supposed to

have been his second wife, Bona of Armagnac, who died at the early age of twenty-two, in the first year of his captivity. Perhaps his love and his grief for her were genuine, and the ideal lady of his imagination slowly grew in his mind, like, and yet unlike, his dead wife, out of his sorrow. But though his complaint of France, to which Villemain refers, is the least satisfactory of his poems, there are in it touches of real patriotism and indignation, and it cannot be supposed that a duke of Orleans looked on unmoved at the calamities of the Royal House. I would rather believe that his affliction was too great for his pen, accustomed to lighter subjects; and that when he attuned his lyre to higher things, the trembling strings, touched with an uncertain hand, gave forth no responsive strain. But in the lines which follow, I contend, little complaint of coldness can be made. It must be remembered, too, that the whole sense of misfortune comes upon one gradually. Fifty years later he would have written better.

"France, jadis on te souloit nommer
En tous païs, le trésor de noblesse:
Car un chacun pouvoit en toy trouver
Bonté, honneur, loyaulté, gentillesse,
Clergie, sens, courtoisie, proesse:
Tous etrangiers amoient te suir,[1]
Et maintenant voy, dont j'ay desplaisance,
Qu'il te convient maint grief mal soustenir,
Très crestien, franc Royaume de France."

"Knowest thou"—he goes on—"whence come thy misfortunes? Knowest thou why thou art in sadness? Let

[1] suir = suivre.

me relate it: listen to me, and thou wilt be wise. Thy great pride, gluttony, idleness, envy, and luxury have compelled God to punish thee, très crestien, franc royaume de France.

"Nevertheless, be not altogether cast down, for God is full of mercy *à largesse*. Go to Him to implore His grace, for He has already promised it to thee; but make Humility thy advocate, in order that He may be very joyous at healing thee entirely; put in Him thy trust. For thee and all He was willing to die, très crestien, franc royaume de France.

"Remember how He has given order that thou shouldst cry 'Mont joye! à liesse!' and that thou shouldst bear on a shield of azure three golden fleurs-de-lis, and to confirm thy courage (pour ardiesse fermer en toy) sent thee the Oriflamme, which made thee lord of all thy enemies. Forget not such great gifts, with which it pleased Him to enrich thee, très crestien, franc royaume de France."

Besides (to abridge two or three verses) God has enriched France with a Dove full of sacred oil, and great wealth of relics; the court of Rome calls France her right arm; many great champions of Christianity have been born of the country—Charlemagne, Roland, and Oliver.

"Et Saint Loys roy, qui fist la rudesse
Des Sarrasins souvent anéantir
En son vivant, par travail et vaillance.
Les croniques le monstrent, sans mentir,
Très crestien, franc royaume de France."

Therefore, all that France has to do is to repent, and offer many masses.

"Dieu a les bras ouvers pour t'acoler,[1]
Prest d'oublier ta vie pécheresse:
Requier pardon, bien te vendra aidier
Nostre Dame, la très puissant princesse,
Qui est ton cry et que tiens pour maitresse.
Les saints aussy te vendront secourir,
Desquelz les corps ont en toy demourance.
Ne vueilles plus en ton péchié dormir,
Très crestien, franc royaume de France.
Et je Charles Duc d'Orleans, rimer
Voulu ces vers, où temps de ma jeunesse.
Devant chascun les vueil bien advouer:
Car prisonnier les fis, je le confesse,
Priant à Dieu qu'avant qu'aye vieillesse
Le temps de paix partout puit advenir,
Comme de cueur j'en ay la desirance,
Et que voye tous ces maulx brief finir
Très crestien franc royaume de France."

And again, in his exhortation to the people to pray for peace:

"Priez pour paix, doulce vierge Marie,
Royne des cieulx et du monde maistresse:
Faictes prier, par vostre courtoisie,
Saints et saintes, et prenez vostre adresse
Vers vostre filz, requérant sa haultesse
Qu'il luy plaise son peuple regarder
Que de son sang a voulu racheter
En desboutant guerre qui tout desvoye.
De prièrez ne vous vueilliez lasser:
Priez pour paix, le vray trésor de joye."

Priests and prelates, monks and holy men, must pray; all clerks and teachers must pray, because in war the course of learning is suspended; they must pray because monasteries are destroyed, and the service of God cannot be carried on.

[1] acoler, to embrace.

Princes and lords, seigneurs and gentlemen must pray, because "meschans gens surmontent Gentillesse", and get all the money, houses, and lands, "which you can see clearly every day." The people, on the other hand, must pray for peace because their seigneurs are too weak to protect them.

"Dieu tout puissant nous vueille conforter
Toutes choses en terre, ciel, et mer!
Priez vers luy que brief en tout pourvoye,
En lui seul est de tous maulx amender:
Priez pour paiz le vray trésor de joye."

One more plea for his patriotism. It will be allowed that if he did not love his country, he hated the English.

"Comment voyje ces Anglois esbahis,
Resjoys toy, franc royaume de France,
On apperçoit que de Dieu sont haïs
Puis qu'ilz n'ont plus couraige ni puissance.
Bien pensoient par leur oultrecuidance
Toy surmonter et tenir en servaige,
Et ont tenu à tort son héritaige.
Mais à présent, Dieu pour toy se combat
Et se monstre du tout de ta partie:
Leur grant orgueil entièrement abat
Et t'a rendu Guienne et Normandie."

It is a hymn of triumph for the recovery of Guienne and Normandy, and the last line is the refrain of the ballad. What he says of the civil war in England is very curious.

"N'ont pas Anglois souvent leurs roys trahis:
Certes ouyl, tous en ont congnoissance:
Et encore le roy de leur païs
Est maintenant en doubtense balance.
D'en parler mal chascun Anglois s'avance:
Assez monstrent par leur mauvais langaige
Que voulentiers lui feroient oultraige.

Qui sera roy entr' eulx est grant débat:
Pour ce, France, que veulx tu qui te die,
De sa verge Dieu les pugnist et bat
Et t'a rendu Guienne et Normandie."

Generally, however, his regrets are of a personal nature.

"En regardant vers le païs de France
Ung jour m'avint, à Dovre sur la mer,
Qu'il me souvint de la doulce plaisance
Que soulòye où dit païs trouver.
Si commençay de cueur à souspirer,
Combien certes que grant bien me faisoit
De veoir France que mon cueur amer doit."

His verse is, of course, allegorical. All the virtues and all the vices are personified. The first poem of all is a striking example. "In time past," he says, "when Dame Nature brought me into the world, she put me under the governance of a lady called Infancy; giving her strict order to nourish and guard me tenderly, without allowing Care or Melancholy to have any society with me. In this Infancy did her duty loyally, for which I owe her thanks. When I was grown up, Age came bearing a message from Dame Nature, to the effect that I was to be turned over to the care of Jeunesse, to whom accordingly I went. While I was in her house, one day before the beginning of Spring (it was Saint Valentine's day) she came to my bedside, and woke me up, saying, 'You sleep too much. Wake now, and get ready quickly, for I mean to take you to a Seigneur who holds me his dear and faithful servant, and who, without doubt, will make us both welcome.' I answered—'Gracious mistress, with glad heart I am content to obey

your will, but humbly ask the name and condition of this great Seigneur."

She tells him that it is the god of Love 'que j'ay servi et serviray tousjours.' At mention of this name he is horribly frightened, remembering the things he has heard of the mischief wrought by Love; but being reassured, consents to go. They arrive after a long journey at a "manoir trop bel assis et plaisant à véoir.' Jeunesse informs the porter that she has brought Charles of Orleans. That functionary requests them to wait inside, on the hall chairs we presume, while he goes to Venus and Cupid to announce them. He presently returns bringing with him Bel-Acueil and Plaisance, at sight of whom Charles changes colour,

> "Car jeunes gens perdent tost contenance
> Quant en lieu sont ou n'ont point d'acointance
> Si luy on dit; 'Bien soiez vous venue.'

By these officers of the court he is taken to Amour himself, who receives him kindly, saying that he remembers his father and many others of his lineage. He is greatly abashed, and is assured by Amour that he shall certainly not leave the court till he has done homage and become his servant, to which end Beauté is introduced to him. Thereupon he begins to suffer a good deal, as was to be expected, and continues to suffer till he makes due submission, and takes the oath. The form of swearing fealty consists of several points. These are loyalty, constancy, secresy, fidelity, and humility; with some minor things, such as politeness; comeliness, if he can compass it; honour and courage; generosity, 'car c'est chose qui avance no-

blesse'; avoidance of 'villenie', and diligent study, so far as in him lies, of 'les gracieux tours, qui servent en amours,' to wit, singing, dancing, making chansons and ballads, and all other joyous 'esbatements.'

All this accomplished, the secretary of Amour, named Bonnefoy, is instructed to draw up a 'lettre de retenue', which is sealed by Loyalty, and delivered to him. The letter follows, which we omit. It concludes:

"Donné le jour Saint Valentin, martir,
En la cité de Gracieux-désir,
Où avons fait nostre conseil tenir,
Par Cupido et Vénus souverains,
A ce presens plusieurs Plaisirs mondains."

Afterwards he pursues the same allegory, which we need not follow any further, by shewing how Age comes to tell him that Reason has made complaint to Nature about him, and that Vieillesse is about to bring him a summons.

This is not a bad specimen, though rather tedious, of Charles's allegorical powers. The tedium is relieved, as I have said before, by the charm of his language.

Out of such a mass of verses, almost all on the same topic, it is very hard to make a good selection. Let us, however, by a few extracts, try to shew the character of his poetry.

His great enemy is Melancholy. He is never tired of abusing that pensive spirit. He says:

"Fermez lui l'uis[1] au visaige
Mon cueur à Mérencolie:
Gardez qu'elle n'entre mye
Pour gastre nostre mesnaige.

[1] uis = huis, door.

Comme le chien plain de raige
Chassez la, je vous en prie:
Fermez lui l'uis au visaige,
Mon cueur, à Mérencolie."

Again:

"Qu'est ce là?—c'est Mérencolie—
—Vous n'entrerez jà—Pourquoy?—Pour ce
Que vostre compaignie acourse[1]
Mes jours, dont je foys[2] grant folie."

Again:

"Allez vous amuser maintenant,
Ennuyeuse Mérencolie:
Regardez la saison jolie
Qui partout vous va reboutant."

Yet again:

"Pour Dieu, boutons la hors,
Ceste Mérencolie,
Qui si fort nons guerrie
Et fait tant de grans tors
Monstrons nous les plus forts,
Mon cueur, je vous en prie:
Pour Dieu boutons la hors,
Ceste Mérencolie."

And, for once more:

"Alez vous en; alez; alez;
Soussi, Soing, et Mérencolie,
Me cuidez[3]-vous toute ma vie
Gouverner, comme fait avez?
Je vous promet que non ferez:
Raison aura sur vous maistrie:
Alez vous en; alez: alez:
Soussi, Soing, et Mérencolie.

[1] abridge. [2] foys = fais. This is rather an unusual form.
[3] cuide, from cogitare, just as croire from credere, to think, to presume.

Si jamais plus vous retournez
Avecques vostre compaignie,
Je pri à Dieu qu'il vous maudie
Et ce par qui vous revendrez:
Alez-vous en: alez: alez."

His verses, indeed, are full of imprecations, prayers, and abuse directed to Mérencolie, Soing, Soussy, and Ennuy. The last, in a captivity of twenty-five years, must have been, indeed, a very formidable enemy. Once he says:—

"Deux ou trois couples d'Ennuy
J'ay tousjours en ma maison."

His similes and figures are very simple. He speaks of "les fenestres de mes yeux": "la chambre de ma pensée": "l'uis de ma pensée."

"Mon cueur qui faisoit appareil
De Deffence contre l'armée
De Fortune."

He says that the 'hostel' of Nature "de noir de Tristesse est tendu": he asks Jeunesse why she has sold him:

"À grant marchié, comme pour rien,
Es mains de madame Vieillesse,
Qui ne me fait guères de bien."

Occasionally, as all these trouvères—of whom Charles is certainly the last and best—used to do, he changes his note of gallantry for one of satire. Witness the following out of only two or three in a similar strain, for Charles seldom allows himself a word against the sex; perhaps only when Mérencolie had him down, with Soussy, Soing, and Ennuy, so that he could hardly help himself.

"Sera-elle jamais trouvée
Celle qui ayme Loyaulté?
Et qui a ferme voulenté
Sans avoir légière pensée.
Il convient qu'elle soit criee
Pour en savoir la vérité.
Sera-elle jamais trouvée
Celle qui ayme Loyaulté?
Je croy bien qu'elle est deffiée
Des aliez de Faulceté,
Dont il y a si grant planté
Que de paour elle s'est mussiée.
Sera-elle jamais trouvée?"[1]

He has the customary verses on the Seasons, without which no poet's collection was then complete. Here are his ungracious lines to Winter:

"Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain;
Esté est plaisant et gentil,
En tesmoing de may et d'avril
Qui l'acompaignent soir et main.

Esté revest champs, bois et fleurs
De sa livrée de verdure
Et de maintes autres couleurs,
Par l'ordonnance de Nature.

Mais vous, Yver, trop estes plain
De nège, vent, pluye et grézil:
On vous deust bannir en exil.
Sans point flatter, je parle plain:
Yver, vous n'estes qu'un villain."

His most beautiful verses, touched with real feeling, are those on the loss of his wife, if it is of his wife he speaks. Read these on her obsequies:

[1] His friend the Duke of Bourbon returned a spirited answer to this ballad, the last line of which is "Duc d'Orleans, je l'ay trouvée."

"J'ay fait l'obsèque de madame
Dedens le moustier amoureux,
Et le service pour son ame
A chanté Penser-Doloreux.
Mains sierges de Souspirs-piteux
Ont esté en son luminaire,
Aussy j'ay fait la tombe faire
De regretez, tous de larmes paints;
Et tout entour moult richement
Est escript: "Cy gist vrayement
Le trésor de tous biens mondains."

* * * *

N'en parlons plus; mon cueur se pasme
Quant il oyt les fais vertueux
D'elle qui estoit, sans nul blasme,
Comme jurent celles et ceulx
Qui congnoissoyent ses conseulx.
Si croy que Dieu l'a voulu traire
Vers lui, pour parer son repaire
De paradis, ou sont les saints:
Car c'est d'elle bel parement
Que l'en nommoit communement
Le trésor de tous biens mondains."

And these, on her death, which are still better:

"Las! mort, qui t'a fait si hardie
De prendre la noble princesse
Qui estoit mon confort, ma vie,
Mon bien, mon plaisie, ma richesse!
Puisque tu as prius ma maitresse,
Prens moy aussy, son serviteur:
Car j'ayme mieulx prouchainement
Mourir, que languir en tourment,
En paine, soussy, et douleur.

Las! de tous biens estoit garnie
Et en droite fleur de jeunesse:
Je prye à Dieu qu'il te maudie,
Faulse-mort, plaine de rudesse!

Se prise l'eusses en vieillesse
Ce ne fust pas si grant rigueur:
Mais prise l'as hastivement
Et m'a laissié piteusement
En paine, soussy, et douleur.

Las! je suy seul sans compaignie:
Adieu, madame, ma lyesse.
Or est nostre amour despartie!
Non pourtant: je vous fais promesse,
Que de prières à largesse,
Morte, vous servirai de cueur,
Sans oublier aucunement,
Et vous regretteray souvent
En paine, soussy, et douleur.

Dieu, sur tout souverain seigneur,
Ordonnez, par grâce et doulceur,
À l'âme d'elle tellement
Qu'elle ne soit pas longuement
En paine, soussy, et douleur."

Whenever, which is seldom, he gets out of his allegories, he is exceedingly simple and touching. For instance:

"Belle que je tiens pour amye
Pensez quelque part que je soie,
Que jamais je ne vous oublie.
Et pour ce, prier vous vouldroye,
Jusques à tant que vous revoye,
Qu'il vous souviengne de celluy
Qui a trouvé peu de mercy
En vous, se dire je l'osoye."

The fashion of the time, which made each song turn upon one fancy, sometimes very small, prevented our poet from achieving any complete lyrical success. For although a lyric should contain one thought, and one thought only, round which the fancy of the poet may weave his charms of

verse, yet in Charles's verses one thought is repeated over and over again, and every separate conceit forms a separate chanson. His verses might be classified, something in this manner:

(1) Against Melancholy, "Soing, Soussy, et Ennuy,"
(2) Prayer that his 'belle' will prove kind to him,
(3) On the death of his mistress,
(4) The regrets of exile,

and so on. Yet there is, in this continual harping on one strain, a grace which it is difficult to define. Petrarch played but one melody, with the variations of an accomplished musician; in Shakespeare's sonnets there is one underlying strain; in the 'In Memoriam' of Tennyson, beneath all the poet's changing moods, we hear the wail of sorrow and bewilderment that Death has caused. I would not compare the songs of Charles with these: I only contend that monotony is not always tedious, and that if he is tedious, it is from the unskilful art and unnatural taste of the time in which he lived.

But the more I read in Charles of Orleans, the more I find in him that perfect knightliness which the teachings of a chivalrous age could only produce on a generous nature. He seems to me to have been, if ever man was, what we call now, a gentleman; what they used to call a knight, sans peur et sans reproche. Most unfortunate of men, as he was, for fifty years, it is pleasant to look on the last fifteen years of his life spent in an atmosphere of poetry and music and noble thoughts, in company with his young wife and his children, and surrounded by friends, poets like himself, who doubtless soothed the old man's

soul, troubled with sad memories, by kindly praise and pious flattery. But misfortune followed him to the last, and I believe, with his biographer, that the reproaches of his king cut to the quick, and dealt the fatal blow to a soul which held loyalty, truth, fidelity, honour, and courage the only virtues of a prince and a gentleman. All these he had, and Louis the Eleventh had none of them. Nevertheless, had Louis been Charles, France might have had a different history, and that 'trés crestien franc royaume' might well have become an appanage to the Dukedom of Burgundy. But what would have been the history of the world, had all rulers been honest, and all kings lovers of truth?

NOTE I.

The resemblance between the "Enfance et Jeunesse du Prince" described above, in which he visits the Court of Love, and the 'Court of Love' of Chaucer, is too striking to be accidental. Either they have a common origin, or Charles imitated Chaucer during his long captivity. This is very possible. The description of the Court is similar in both, and there are many close points of resemblance. Thus in Chaucer, we find among the statutes of Love, the following:

"The eighteenth statute, wholly to commande,
To plese thy lady, is, That thou eschewe
With sluttishness thyself for to offende:
Be jollife, fresh, and fete, with thinges newe,
Courtly with mann, this is al thy due,
Gentil of port, and loving cleanlinesse;
This is the thing that liketh thy mistresse."

Compare this with Charles:

"Le premier est qu'il se tiengne jolis,
Car les dames les tienent à grant pris.
Le second est que très courtoisement
Soy maintendra et gracieusement."

NOTE II.

A graceful rendering into English verse of the lines 'J'ay fait l'obséque de Madame' has been made by Cary. I extract the two verses of which I have quoted the French.

"To make my lady's obsequies
My love a minster wrought,
And, in the chantry, service there
Was sung by doleful thought:
The tapers were of burning sighs,
That light and odour gave:
And sorrows, painted o'er with tears,
Enlumined her grave:
And round about, in quaintest guise,
Was carved, 'Within this tomb there lies
The fairest thing in mortal eyes.'

No more: no more: my heart doth faint
When I the life recal
Of her, who lived so free from taint,
So virtuous deemed by all:
That in herself was so complete,
I think that she was ta'en
By God to deck His paradise,
And with His saints to reign:
For well she doth become the skies,
Whom, while on earth, each one did prize,
The fairest thing in mortal eyes."

NOTE III.

Mention is made in the Paston Letters of the release of Charles. (Letter 3, from Robert Repps to John Paston):

"Tidings. The Duke of Orleans hath made his oath upon the sacrament, and used it, never for to bear arms against England, in the presence of the king and all the lords, except my lord of Gloucester. . . God give grace the said Lord of Orleans be true, for this same week shall he towards France."

CHAPTER III.

OLIVIER BASSELIN DE VIRE.

"Back and side go bare, go bare."

OLIVIER BASSELIN, a mighty drinker and a good singer, lived in the valley of the Vire in Normandy, somewhere between the years 1350 and 1450. He was, by profession, a Fulling-Miller, but one fears that the real occupation of his life was to drink. Tradition points at his wife as the working partner in the firm. But we have really no particulars about his life on which we can rely. His very existence has been disputed, and all we know of him is from a song by Le Houx, in which, a hundred years after Olivier was gathered to his fathers, he collects all the traditions that remained of him. And we gather from his songs certain small particulars which relate to his habits and preferences. Thus, we learn that he preferred wine of Orleans to any other, when he could get it; that he drank cider when he could not get wine, and perry when he could not get cider. And his chief amusement in life was to sing the praises of good drink. Many a lusty song he must have trolled out in his tavern, to the delight of the rustics, and the edification

of the village. There remain to this day upwards of sixty. Of his life we can only hesitatingly say, and with some diffidence, that his wife objected to his following the bent of his own inclinations—unreasonably, as some may think; that he became very poor; that his relations had finally to interfere and to sequestrate, alienate, or put into safe keeping the fulling-mill—if not the person—of Olivier Basselin; and that the English wrought him great shame, if not actual deprivation of life. Thus much of his story. Of his personal appearance but one trait remains. Popular history, which loves to store in its memory such facts as Cæsar's baldness, Edward's long legs, and Richard's hump, has remembered only of Olivier Basselin, his nose. Even this, so fleeting is the memory of men, only because he sings of it himself. And since this nose, so fat, so fair, so comely, so glowing, so Bardolphian, beaming upon us in such Anacreontic joviality through four long centuries, is all that remains in our minds to mark the manner of the man, hear what the owner says of it himself:

"Beau nez! dont les rubis ont consté mainte pipe
De vin blanc et clairet:
Et duquel la couleur richement participe
Du rouge et violet.

Gros nez! qui te regarde à travers un grand verre
Te juge encor plus beau:
Tu ne resembles point au nez de quelque hère
Qui ne boit que de l'eau.

*Un coq d'Inde sa gorge à toy semblable porte;
Combien de riches gens
N'ont pas si riche nez! Pour te peindre en la sorte
Il faut beaucoup de temps."

* Query. Were turkeys known in the time of Olivier Basselin? If not, alas! the song is not genuine. But the point is disputed.

Unknown in France, and popular at first only in the retired Val-de-Vire, the hearty poet lived, and sang, and drank. Posthumous fame came to him. For his songs, chanted at all the taverns, handed down from mouth to mouth, were collected, more than a hundred years after his death, and published in 1576 with additions of his own, by the worthy Master Jean Le Houx, under the name of the Vaux de Vire of Olivier Basselin. And from this phrase—the Vaux de Vire—has come by natural corruption of the populace, the modern word Vaudeville. So, at least, say some; and as those who deny the derivation can find no better one to suggest than that of Voix de Ville, let us, who admire the jovial miller of the Vire, abide by the explanation which does him honour.

So much for the miller. But there was, besides, a pilot, a man expert and dexterous in sea matters, who lived also about the same time, in the same neighbourhood, and who was also called Olivier Basselin, or Bisselin. This mariner published a book on the "Right Declination, etc.," in the year 1559, and as some think was the original Olivier, author of the songs. I, however, can hardly believe that the author of the Vaux de Vire could also have written a work on Nautical Astronomy.

Now for Maitre Jean Le Houx. This worthy, born of a good old family in 1550, or thereabouts, was an advocate in Vire. As an advocate it is not probable that he effected great things; for he was also a distinguished scholar, painter, and poet. He it was who gave to the world, about about the year 1576, the first collection of the Vaux de Vire of Basselin, with others of his own. All that is known

of his life is that he was persecuted for his songs by the priests, on the ground that they corrupted men's morals by instigating them to drink; that he defended himself in verse; that he made a pilgrimage to Rome, probably in consequence of this little 'difficulty'; and that in 1613 he founded certain masses for the benefit of the poor. The first edition of the Vaux de Vire is completely lost, because, says one editor, it was probably suppressed by Le Houx out of deference to the monks; or because, says another, the songs were so excessively popular that the books got "thumbed" to pieces. Other editions have been published in the years 1664, 1811, 1833, and 1858.

The latest edition contains, first, the so-called Vaux de Vire of Olivier Basselin, from the edition of 1664; secondly, the Vaux de Vire of Jean Le Houx; thirdly, a collection of Norman songs of the sixteenth century; and lastly, a small collection of older songs from an edition of 1616.

The question has arisen, how much of these songs are due to Basselin or others, and how much to Le Houx himself. For it may briefly be stated of this fulling-miller that we know nothing at all about him. All the particulars I have given are out of a song by Le Houx, and may go for nothing. The name of Basselin is first mentioned, as his French editors have so far found out, in a letter addressed to the secretary of the Duke of Valois, afterwards Francis I., date before 1515—where we have these words:

"Et en ceste bouche je finyrai la presente disant
Olivier Basselin
Orrons nous plus de tes nouvelles?
Vous ont les Angloys mis à fin?" . . . ;

The rest of this song is given in the editions of Basselin, but is considered spurious.

M. Bourgueville, sieur de Bras, born in 1504, says of Vire: "C' est le pays d' où sont procédées les chansons que l' on appelle Vaux de Vire, comme les deux."

"Helas! Olivier Basselin." . . .
"En la Duché de Normandie
Il y a si grant pillerie. . . ."

His name is also mentioned by Belleforest, born 1550; by André Duchesne, born 1584; and by La Fresnaye Vauguelin, born 1534. Le Houx died 1616.

There seems then, on the whole, little doubt that there *was* an Olivier Basselin. The songs edited by Le Houx are in the language of the sixteenth century, or the beginning of the seventeenth. If, therefore, they are really Basselin's, they have been touched up, altered, put into shape, and changed beyond power of recognition by the original author. And if they are not Basselin's, they are either Le Houx's own, or a collection of popular drinking songs by various authors, and attributed to Basselin. This seems to be the most rational way out of the difficulty. It is easy to understand how to one well-known song-writer all the popular songs would be attributed, and how Le Houx, collecting these, might have printed them with such alterations as were necessary to make them intelligible, and called them all the poems of Olivier Basselin. Unwritten songs that exist only in the memories of men may last a long time, but they die when their diction becomes obsolete, unless changes are made to suit the changes of the language.

There is no reason to doubt that Le Houx found a large number of spirited popular drinking songs unprinted, and probably unwritten; there is no reason further to doubt that Olivier Basselin in his day was a famous writer of songs, but we have no means of saying how many in this collection are his, or what alterations have been made.

Here is a piece of Le Houx's own verses:

"Plus est honneste un Vau de Vire en table,
Qui va louant hautement le bon vin
Que, mal parlant, dire de son voisin
Quelque propos qui n'est point veritable.
A faire des discours
D' impudiques amours,
Ou quelque autre devis
Que tiennent les amis,
Quand ils sont assembléz pour folastre et rire;
Il vaut bien mieux chanter, en ne beuvant que pire."

In this sentiment one must agree with him. Better to sing a jolly drinking song than to talk scandal or gossip, or worse. Indeed, in the whole collection of Basselin and Le Houx, there is nothing to offend on the score of morality.

In another attempt to defend his muse, he loses his temper, and somewhat pettishly tells his opponents that they may just go away and be condemned to drink nothing but water.

As for the sixty-two songs of the worthy Olivier Basselin, they are right good, well-conceited drinking songs; songs full of light-hearted *abandon*, and rollicking laughter. The poet suffers from a perpetual thirst; his throat is ever dry; he occupies himself with finding occasions and excuses for

drinking. If he hears the coopering of a cask, he begins to think of the good wine that will fill it:

"O tintamare plaisant
Et doucement resonnant
Des touneaux que l'on relie!
Signe qu'on boira d'autant:
Cela me fait réjouir—
O belle harmonie!—
Sans toy je m'alloy mourir
De melancholie."

If he has passed a whole hour without a single dram, he begins to feel pale, anxious, and apprehensive:

"J'ay grand' peur d'une maladie;
Une heure y a que je n'ay beu.
Tant tarder,—las!—comme ay je peu?
Desjà ma face en est blesmie."

His reflections on sacred history inspire him with the deepest regret that Adam did not know the superior attractions of drinking over eating:

"Adam—(*c'est chose très notoire*)—
Ne nous eust mis en tel danger,
Si au lieu du fatal manger,
Il se fust plus tost pris à boire."

When he is dry, he says, he cannot talk; he has no wit, no understanding:

"Si voulez que je cause et preche
Et parler Latin promptement,
Tenez ma bouche tousjours fraiche
Du bon vin l'arrosant souvent.
Car je vous dy certainement,
Quand j'ay seiche la bouche,
Je n'ay pas plus d'entendement,
Ni d'esprit qu'une souche."

Wine is, indeed, a medicine for all sorts of diseases:

"Me voulez vous guarir de la berlue?
En un verre bien net
Faut seulement mettre ma veue
Ce joly vin clairet:
Qui chaleur donne à l'âme morfondue.
Encore chopine pleine,
Encore chopine.

Me voulez vous, quand je suis en colère
Ragaillardir le cœur?
Tant seulement il me faut faire boire
Ceste bonne liqueur
Qui le chagrin converte en bonne chère.
Encore chopine pleine,
Encore chopine."

He is so struck with the brilliancy and manifest utility of this idea, that he repeats it in a dialogue between an old man and a doctor.

The old man asks his medical adviser to cure him of a cough and cold.

Quoth the sage:

"*Recipe* du jus de la plante,
Qui se soutient par echalas,
Deux ou trois fois à ton repas."

"But," says his patient, "my stomach is weak, and my digestion bad:"

"*Recipe* pour ton ordinaire
Et te donne à travers les dents
Du rouge sirop d'Orleans."

He also suffers from gout at the change of seasons, and from sleeplessness.

"À decoction de vendange
Recipe trois veltes, et plus
Ne songe tant à tes écus."

"Tout vos *recipe*—c'est le vin—(says the old patient)
Le vin est il chose si bonne?
Sans luy ne seriez medecin."

To whom the healer:

"À touts ceux-la le vin ordonne
Qui en humeur me sont egaux:
Car le vin guarit tous mes maux."

Wine is not only a medicine, but a consoler in cases of disappointed love. Thus, seeing Madeleine sound asleep under the shade of a green sycamore by the brink of a fountain, and on a bed of thyme and marjolaine, he cannot resist the temptation of kissing her on the lips. Thereupon la belle wakes up, and looks at him with an "œil farouche," and scornfully says, 'Biberon (bibber), don't touch me; never should a pretty girl be loved by a man who does nothing but get drunk.'

"Je lui reponds. "Ce n'est pas déshonneur
D'aimer le vin—une chose si bonne—
Vostre bel œil entretient en chaleur
Et le bon vin en santé ma personne.
Pour vous aimer, faut il que j'abandonne
Le soin qu'on doit avoir de sa santé?
Fi de beauté,
Qui son amant de desplaisir guerdonne
Au lieu de bien qu'il avoit merité!
Sus—sus! qu'on se resveille!
Voici vin, excellent,
Qui fait lever l'oreille
Il fait mol qui n'en prend."

Nothing softened, la belle bids him begone and seek another amoureuse. To which he replies:

"Puisque par toy j'ay perdu mes amours,
Tousjours—tousjours:
Contre l'amour et la soif rigoreuse
Que sois, bon vin, armé de ton secours.
Sus, sus! etc."

His reflections shew that profundity of wisdom which men in a chronic state of 'drink' sometimes exhibit. Here is a comparison between Noah and Lycurgus:

"Que Noë fut un patriarche digne!
Car ce fut luy qui nous planta la vigne,
Et beut premier le jus de son raisin.—
O le bon vin.

Mais tu estois, Lycurgue, mal habile,
Qui ne voulois qu'on heust vin en ta ville.
Les beuveurs d'eau ne font point bonne fin.
O le bon vin."

"Apple trees," he tells us in another part, "are planted in cemeteries, in memory of the defunct cider-drinkers, by their pious descendants. They serve to remind us of the holy thought that they who sleep beneath, once, like us, loved to drink. Therefore let us..." The usual conclusion.

I have already intimated that domestic felicity was not one of the blessings of Olivier's life. The red-nosed jolly man, who would do nothing but drink and sing, while the fulling-mill was simply going to the dogs, was certainly not the ideal husband of an industrious young maiden. Perhaps to conciliate her, perhaps with some little malice—your best of men are sometimes malicious if their hobbies are interfered with—he makes a song in which his wife represents

as the result of her experience, that the only way to make marriage happy is to give the husband plenty of drink. But as this method of conciliation was not apparently successful, in the next song he says,

"Ma femme se dit mal pourveue,
Que je perds les biens et la veue
A force de boire du bon:
Mais ne faut qu'elle s'en tourmente:
Car c'est une chose excellente
Qu'un vénérable biberon."

He possesses that perfect self-disrespect which is the whole armour of a drunkard. He is not good, he says, at feats of arms; he is not given to much making of love:

"La bouteille c'est ma cuirasse:
Mon casque c'est mon gobelet:
Et le jambon mon pistolet.
Qu'on me remplisse cette tasse:
J'en veulx—le cueur point ne me fault—
Combattre la soif qui n'assault."

And, with greater felicity of expression,

"Hardy comme un Cæsar je suis à ceste guerre
Où l'on combat armé d'un grand pot et d'un verre:
Plus tost un coup de rire me perce et m'entre au corps,
Qu'un boulet qui cruel rend les gents si tost morts.

Le cliquetis que j'aime est celuy des bouteilles:
Les pipes ces bereaux pleins de liqueurs verneilles:
Ce sont mes gros canons qui battent sans faillir
La soif qui est le fort que je veux assaillir.

Je trouve quant à moy que les gents sont bien bestes
Que ne se font plus tost an vin rompre les testes,
Qu'aux coups de coutelas en cherchant de renom:
Que leur chant estant morts si l'on parle ou non?"

But in a brief moment of repentance, he says:

"Je suis beaucoup irrité
Contre toy, vin desloyal,
Tu m'as fait beaucoup de mal:
Tu m'as mis à povreté,
Et nous as fait disputer bien souvent ma femme et moy."

This is a good specimen of his reasoning powers:

"Alas! I see that my Love has left me; she says that I drink too much, and that that shortens life. I must go then to some desert place, where, drinking no more cider or wine, I may pass the rest of my age. But if I drink nothing but pure water, very soon shall I finish my days, for such drink is contrary to my nature. This will be hard penance. So shall I die, regretting my love, and practising abstinence like a hermit. Well—well—since in the desert there is no drink worth anything, don't let us leave any of this good wine in the pot. I drink to you before I go away. After my death write this upon my tomb: 'Here lies a man who dearly loved his drink. Great pity for the taverns of Vire that he died.'"

In a siege, the only thing that he thinks of is the rescue of the hogsheads:

"Les ennemis sont en furie.
Sauvez nos tonneaux, je vous prie;"

or, at least, if they take the town, let them find nothing but empty casks and the dregs:

"An moins s'il prent nostre cité
Qu'il n'y trouve plus que la lie:
Vuidons nos tonneaux, je vous prie!"

He tells the story of a shipwreck in a song of con-

siderable merit; but the loss of the good wine is the lamentable part of it:

"J'avois chargé mon navire
De vins qui estoient très bons:
Tels comme il les faut à Vire,
Pour boire aux bons compagnons.
Donnez par charité à boire à ce povre homme marinier
Qui par tourmente et fortune a tout perdu sur la mer.

Nous estions là bonne troupe
Aimant ce que nous menions,
Qui ayant le vent en pouppe
Tous l'un à l'antre en beuvions.
Donnez etc.

Desjà proche du rivage
Ayant beu cinq on six coups,
Vinmes à faire naufrage
Et ne sauvasme qus nous.
Donnez etc.

Il fut mieux en nostre gorge,
Ce vin que d'estre en la mer:
Quand chascun chez soy se loge
Il est hors de tout danger.
Donnez etc."

He attempts a defence of the drunkard:

"They say that drinking shortens his life. Why, then, so much the less reason to be afraid of the pip, which is really a most fatal disorder to chickens. Then the drunkard is no murderer, because he drowns his wrath in wine; only take care of the fellow who drinks drop by drop, because he strikes at once without reflection. Alas! what harm can the poor old toper do? He goes to bed, and kills nobody; or else he tells joyous stories; he does not think

of usury; he does no man any injury. Can any water-drinker be more harmless?"

Here is a jovial roaring song—were there students at Vire?

"Louons nostre hostel:
(Bibimus satis):
Et l'hoste lequel
Nos pavit gratis,
Et sans reschigner,
Onerans mensas
De mets delicats.

Il nous aime bien
(Hoc patet nobis):
Car son meilleur vin
Deprompsit cadis:
Et nous en a fait
Usque ad oras
Remplie nos hanaps.

* *

Qu'on se donne donc
Cunctis convivis:
A l'hoste beuvons
Pateris plenis:
Le remercians
A vingt ans d'ici
Puissions faire ainsi."

Let us finish by a few specimens of contemporary Norman songs. In the edition of P. L. Jacob, they are bound up with the Vaux de Vire of Basselin. Some of them are very light and spirited. Here is one, evidently from the number of repetitions a choral song:

"J'ai fay une chansonette
Depuis que je suys ici:
Depuis que je suis ici.

Je boy a vous s'il vous hette[1]
J'ay fay une chansonette
Je boy a vous, s'il vous hette:
Vous plyerez vostre amy.
Vous plyerez vostre amy.
J'ay fay une chansonette
Depuis que je suis ici."

There are three more verses given, but there might as well be three hundred, as the song was probably passed from mouth to mouth, each adding one line or two.

Here is another. His bottle is his 'amye.' The 'glou, glou' reminds us of the burden in the English song—"which still went gluggity glug."

"Je ne quitterai jamais ma mye
Tandis qu'elle fera glou glou:
Je ne quitterai jamais ma mye
Qu'elle ne soit vuide de tout.
C'est à toy, mon camarade,
A qui je livre l'assaut?
Si je refrains mon haleine
Pardonnez moy—s'il le faut.

Prend donc ton dibedibedou,
Mon joly capitaine:
Prend donc ton dibedibedou
Et vuidez tout d'un coup.
Je ne quitterai jamais m'amye,
Tandis qu'elle fera glou glou."

Here is a very curious song, the refrain of which is the same as that used at the Feast of the Ass of Sens:

"My: my: my: my: mon doulx enfant,
Revendrez vous jamais vers my;

[1] If it please you. The word is derived from hilaritus.

My: my: my: my: mon doulx amy?
J'en ay le cueur si très doulent
Que oucques puys d'œil ne dormy
My: my: my: my: mon doulx amy!
Amy—hin han! hin han! hin han!
Or tenez ces cents escuz comptanz:
N'espaignez point le desmourant:
Por Dieu t'nez men fien[1]
Hin han! hin han! hin han! hin han!"

This is pretty:

"En depit des faulx envieux
Qui font aux loyaulx amoureux
Peine très dure,
Nous irons jouer, vous et moy,
Sur la verdure.
Margot, Bietrix, et Alison, Jouenne, Jouen et Berthelot,
Voudriez vous point ouyr le son du flageolet?
Et danser sus le muguet,
De si bon het,[2]
Sus la verdure?"

And these four lines are graceful in their simplicity:

"Royne des fleurs, que je desire tant!
Quand je vous voy mon cueur volle de joye:
Las! dictes moy si vostre amour est moye:
Dictes le moy gentil corps advenant."

Of making of extracts there is no end. Let us stop. These songs, so natural, so gay and lighthearted, want no critic's talk. It has been complained that Basselin was grossly ignorant of all rules. Of course he was. So also was Burns. At the same time, as a collection of popular drinking songs, this of the worthy Master Le Houx seems to me unequalled. There are many good songs in English

[1] ma fien, mon enfant. [2] hilaritas, sometimes written hait.

and Scotch, but no one set belonging to one century so rich and spirited as these. They are only drinking songs; there is very little humour in them; there are no tears, but there is fun in them; a dance in the measure, and a clashing of rhymes and words that goes well to the clashing of the glasses on the table as the singer trolls out his thirsty strains. We have grown melancholy; we like the touch of human sadness that stays mirth over mirthful; we like the smile that comes from humour and cynicism. Only in the days of Basselin men were not so refined; grave things then were good jokes; the gallows-tree was so familiar as to breed contempt and even ridicule; war and the chances of war were so much in men's mouths that insecurity of life and property was not, after all, such a bad subject for a wit. Above all, men loved then, as they do now, to gather together and forget their troubles in the temporary oblivion of wine and song.

CHAPTER IV.

MARTIAL DE PARIS.

TIME has dealt more kindly with Martial de Paris than with many others of his brethren. The author of *Les Vigilles de Charles VII.* and of the *Arrêts d'amour* had, it is true, the advantage of the printing-press at a time when people were too much devoted to publishing their own works and the classics to think of the productions of their fathers. Accordingly, while Christine de Pisan is not yet published at all, while Villon had little chance of popularity till after his death, while Charles of Orleans lay in manuscript for three hundred years, and Olivier Basselin made his *début*, considerably altered, more than a hundred years after he was 'brought to great shame' by the English; Martial printed himself in no less than four editions, if not five, before his death. In some respects he deserves to be remembered above all his contemporaries, and, as my extracts will shew, in clearness and energy of conception, as well as in grace of diction, he may be ranked beside any writer of his own or the following age.

Of his life we know just this, and no more. His family

came from Auvergne, he himself being a native of Paris, hence he is sometimes called Martial de Paris, sometimes Martial d'Auvergne. He was born in 1440, and died in 1508. He was *procureur* in the court of the Parliament, and notary at the Chatelet of Paris. The Chronique Scandaleuse gives the following account of an incident in his life. "In the said year, in the month of June, when beans blossom and ripen, it happened that several men and women lost their understanding, and even at Paris there was among others a young man named Martial d'Auvergne, procureur in the court of Parliament, and notary in the Chatelet of Paris, who, after being married for three weeks to one of the daughters of M. Jacques Fournier, counsellor to the King in the said court of Parliament, lost his senses in such a manner that on the day of Monsieur St. John the Baptist, about nine o'clock in the morning, such a frenzy seized him that he threw himself out of the window of his chamber into the street, and broke his thigh and bruised his whole body, and was in great danger of dying. And afterwards remained a long time in the said frenzy, and then came to himself and was in his right mind."

He died in 1508, if his epitaph is to be trusted:

> "Sous Jésus Christ, en bon sens pacifique,
> Patiemment rendit son esprit
> En mai treize, ce jour là sans replique,
> Qu'on disoit lors mil cinq cent huit."

The Arrêts d'amour are in prose, with an introduction and conclusion in verse. Some of them are very curious specimens of a kind of literature now quite forgotten. They are written in legal phraseology, and with an appearance of

great gravity. They illustrate a whole literature in prose and verse, of which they are the last examples; and they have the advantage over the 'Droitz nouveaux' of Coquillart, in being free from the trammels of rhyme and metre, and thereby better able to preserve the forensic gravity and formality which constitute their charm.

After describing the court and the robes of the officials in a short introductory poem, we go on directly to the Arrêts. Of these there are a great many. Let us select one or two.

"Before the Bailiff de Joye is heard a suit between a young lover, plaintiff on the one hand, and his mistress, defendant on the other. The said lover, the plaintiff, said that after he had taken leave of his mistress to go away, she recalled him in order to speak to him; that on returning she made pretence to whisper, and kissed him with such force that she nearly made his nose bleed; that she also, in doing this, struck him hard with the corner of her cap, wherein was a pin; that by this act the pin scratched his cheek, which became inflamed, so that the said plaintiff does not expect to get well for three months. In consequence of this he does not dare to shew himself before people, and is still very ill. And because he knows that the defendant did it not from hatred and malice, but by accident, he does not ask for damages, but only demands that she should be sentenced to cure him, and to tend him until he be recovered.

"On the part of the defendant it was urged that the plaintiff had been the assailant, in order to get the said kiss; that with regard to the scratch, it was an accident;

that there was nothing to cry about, because the said plaintiff had not left off eating and drinking, and yet complained of his head.

"Upon which, both parties heard, the said Bailiff de Joye by his sentence, and with regard to certain reports of the Physician of Love, who had examined the wound and reported it in a dangerous place, condemned the lady to furnish the plaintiff with fit and proper cloths with which to make good poultices. The defendant, not satisfied with this sentence, appeals to the higher court. Finally, all seen and considered, the Court of Love decides in favour of the first sentence, and nonsuits the appellant. Further, since it has appeared that since the first sentence the defendant has openly boasted that if she is obliged to apply the poultices she will bite the cheek of plaintiff, and that so hard that he will remember it for ever afterwards, the court ruled and decided that she should be condemned to thirty livres fine, to be paid to the prisoners of Love, and to be expended on their behalf in banquets and green turf, and in the costs of the appeal. And further ordered that she should be constrained to obey the decision of the court, on penalty of caption of the body."

Another:

"Before the Recorder of Love in the province of Beauty is tried a suit between a lover, plaintiff on the one hand, in matter of rescision of a contract, and his 'noble dame et amye' defendant, on the other. And said plaintiff states that from the time that they were first acquainted, they made several promises and alliances of Love. And among other things was this compact between them: that every

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night on going to bed, before putting on his night-cap, he should tie two knots in the end of it, and should say, 'God give my lady good night.' And also that she on dressing in the morning should say, 'God give my très doulx amy good day.' And, moreover, that it was agreed that the lover should every week go after dark and wait a good hour in order to obtain a bouquet or a violet, which she was to throw out to him as recompense, or to say, 'à Dieu, God give you good night.' Now the plaintiff pleaded that in making the above contract he had been enormously deceived. For first of all, with regard to the knots in his night-cap he was obliged every third day or so to buy a new one, such was the havoc and destruction caused by this nightly tying. And besides, the knots made it of no use for its proper purpose, and that several times he had been obliged to take it off all together, which was 'grand' peine' with the illness that he had. And on the other point there was deception, 'outre moitié de juste pris' (deceptio ultra dimidiam partem justi precii). For only to get a paltry bouquet or a violet, the gallant was compelled to go and pass once or twice a week before the door of his lady, when he suffered infinite pains. For first of all it generally happened that he did not find her at the door, nor any one else to speak to, and had to walk up and down without fire or light. Secondly, when he wanted to go away, it sometimes happened that he saw the light of her candle through the windows, a sight which so much ravished him that he did not know what would become of him. And because he thought then that she was not gone to bed, and that she would soon come, he would wait there

in the street two or three hours, and sometimes all the night, watching and waiting, and looking up at the windows, in which he had great suffering, especially during the time of winter, in frost and cold, by which he was sometimes so afflicted that he could feel none of his limbs, and his teeth chattered one against the other like a stork. Thirdly, that for the rain and bad weather he was sometimes obliged to go back to his lodging wet through, and without having done anything except kiss the latchet of the door of his Amye. And his clothes were often so steeped with wet that he had to change them all, and put on others quite new, a thing of great grief, without counting the risk of being known or caught by Danger, and without mentioning his falls in the mud and gutters, his striking in the dark against big stones, and his running against carts. Therefore he demands that the said contract be declared null and void, and that he should be restored to liberty.

"On the other part, the defendant pleaded that the plaintiff had no just cause of complaint, for that he had been in no way deceived; that the said contract was passed at the prayer and request of the said lover; that it was besides arranged that she should think of him when putting on her cap, in the same way as he when putting on his; that if he tore many night-caps by his method of tying knots, so did she, and that she had frequently to buy new ribands besides. And as for walking up and down before her door once a week, he was very wrong to complain of it, for whenever the said defendant thought he was coming, for three hours before she was 'toute ravie,' and did not know what she was about. And further, she was not her

own mistress, but was in fear of Danger, whom she had to consider and to take care of, which was a great deal more trouble than the martyrdom that the plaintiff complained of, for she had to pretend to go to sleep when she would rather have kept awake, and to cry when she wanted to laugh. And as for talking about being cold, it was a great shame to him, for a lover ought never to be cold, no, not if it was freezing enough to split the stones. Besides, there was no better occupation for him than waiting for her, because, while walking about he could repeat his Hours and Prayers with nobody to prevent him. And as for tumbling into the gutters and such accidents, they never happen to those who have full confidence in Love. And more she urged of the same nature.

"Both sides heard, the Recorder decided that there was no just ground for the rescinding of the contract, and condemned the lover to go on with it at the pleasure of the lady, and to pay all the costs of the suit."

In another of these cases, the lady is plaintiff, and brings an action against her lover, because that he, 'tout en un moment, sans dire dieu gard, ni autre chose,' kissed her by force. Plaintiff in this case nonsuited, the court ruling that the defendant did quite right; that the action was vexatious; that the kiss so snatched shall not be counted; and that the lady shall be bound to give him another, 'de bon cœur,' and that as often as he may ask, always made and provided that there be no one there to see.

These cases are the most quaint and amusing possible. In one, a process is instituted by a young lady against her friend. Plaintiff states that, whereas she once knew him

the most joyous and pleasant man possible to see, always well dressed, courteous, smiling for everybody, and such that it did one's heart good to see him and to hear him; now he has become heavy, pensive, dreamy, and melancholy; it seems that his life bores him, for he takes no more delight in fête or in joy; if one speaks to him, he thinks 'une grand' piéce' before he answers; when one gives him bouquets, he tears them up bit by bit before they go out of his hands; and when he hears the minstrels and the tabor, tears come into his eyes, and he does nothing but sigh; if one speaks of love, he turns the conversation upon death, or some musty old story; and, in fact, is cold when he ought to be hot, and hot when he ought to be cold. Seeing, then, that the plaintiff has a lively interest in his welfare, she begs that the court will order him to abstain from melancholy company, and make such provision that he return to his former estate.

This most grievous case receives the fullest consideration from the court, which orders that the defendant be kept a prisoner in the Garden of Love for a whole month, so that the sight of flowers and verdure may gradually rejoice his heart; that he be not allowed to walk about alone, nor to frequent melancholy society, nor to go dreaming by himself. And, further, with a view to ensure the right carrying out of this decree, that the plaintiff be ordered to keep him company for the whole of this time, and that no one else be allowed to tend the sufferer.

I have not much space left to consider 'Les Vigilles de Charles VII.' It is in fact a rhymed chronicle of the chief events of the reign of Charles, with occasional funeral lamentations on his death, in the form of a church service.

It begins:

"Venite nunc, et ploremus
Pour le trespas du feu bon Roy;
Et ses biens faitz recolemus,
Comme conduitz en bon arroy,
Sans nous souffrir vivre en desroy,
Dont le louer bien debemus.
Et si gardoit justice et foy:
Venite nunc et ploremus."

Primus Psalmus begins with an ode on the pains of death; afterwards, the regular chronicle is commenced. It is divided into chapters or rations, headed with the contents. Thus:

"La Nativité du Roy."
"La Mort du duc d'Orleans."
"La Tuerie de Paris," etc.
"La Bataille d'Azincour."

Let us take a few verses from this last:

"Quant les Françoys les Angloys virent;
Et qu'ilz estoient plus qu'eulz beaucoup,
De leur armée conte ne firent,
Ains cuidoient avoir gaigné tout.

Si furent tant presumptueulx,
Qu'ilz ne tindrent mesure ne ordre,
Pensans qu'on n'oseroit les yeulx
Contre tant lever ne les mordre.

Les aucuns alloient pourmener
Leurs chevaulx et faire repaistre
Les autres boyre et desjuner
En laissant leur ost et leur maistre.

Quant les Angloys o leur charroy
Virent la manière de faire
Et les Françoys en desarroy
Le prendrent à frapper et braire.

Si y eut de vaillans faiz d'armes
Que les ungs et autres si firent,
Mais les Françoys en piteux termes
Toute la bataille perdirent.

Là moururent plus de cinq mille
Seigneurs, chevaliers, escuyers,
Officiers, aussi gens de ville,
Sans y compter les prisonniers.

Les Ducs d'Orleans et Bourbon,
Richemont et les chefs de guerre,
Si furent tout mis à rançon,
Et puis menez en Angleterre."

After the account of the death of Charles the Sixth, we have "la première leçon," chanted by France, with the responses by the people of France. The second lesson is chanted by Noblesse, and the responses by the Nobles of France. The third is by Labour. In this lesson there are some verses of great beauty.

"Du temps du feu roy
N'estois en esmoy,
Qui me grevast guere:
* * * * *
Il n'est tel plaisir
Que d'estre à gésir
Parmy les beaux champs,
L'herbe verd choisir,
Et prendre bon temps:
Avec ma houlette
Et cornemusette,
Sur la belle herbette
Je m'ejouissoye
Avec bergerette,
Plaisant jolliette,
Baisant la bouchette,
Si douce que soye:
Dieu sait quelle joye!

En l'air je sautoye,
Et chansons chantoye
Comme une alouette."

Are not these diminutives pretty—bergerette, bouchette, jolliette? And what a picture—it would make a charming Dresden china group—of the shepherd and the sheperdess-elet, sitting on the grass with a crook and the bagpipe-ette, he kissing her on her little mouth-elet, as soft as any silk, with Heaven knows what joy!

"Depuis quarante ans,
L'on ne vist les champs
Tellement fleurir,
Régner si bon temps
Entre toutes gens,
Que jusqu'au mourir
Du roy très passé.
Qui pour resjouir,
Et nous secourir,
A maint mal passé."

After this interruption, we go on again with the Chronicle. He relates the story of the Maid of Orleans, the coronation of Henry the Sixth; the defeats of the English.

Then a fourth lesson is chanted by Merchandise, responses by the merchants; and a fifth by Clergy, responses by clerks. Their response is:

"O vray Dieu, père de science,
Qui de tous cas as congnoissance,
Vueilles mettre, par ta bonté,
L'ame du feu bon roy de France
En paix et en tranquillité
Il a tousjours clergié porté,
Fort aymé l'université,
Parquoy en ayes souvenance.

O vray Dieu, père de science,
Qui de tous cas as congnoissance
Vueilles mettre par ta bonté,
L'ame du feu bon roy de France
En paix et en tranquillité."

The sixth lesson is chanted by Pity, the Chaplain of the ladies. They are to go into the deepest mourning; there are to be no more gauds in the way of dress, no veils, no *couvrechefs*, no ornaments, no more songs, no more bouquets, no more presents, no more kisses and other mundane pleasures, for Charles the king is dead. If any lady or bourgeoise knelt before him to make of him some request, he received her with his natural sweetness, putting his hand on her cap or on her head, and making answer in words so kind that each one went away from him joyous.

"Adieu le roy vaillant et vertueux,
Charles Septiesme, et juste, et secourable!
Adieu le roy benin, victorieux,
Humble, cortois, gracieux, amiable!
Adieu le prince aimé et agréable,
Qui honora les nobles fleurs-de-lys,
Et la couronne insigne et desirable,
Dont les fleurons a si fort embellis!

Adieu presens, baquettes, afficquets,
Que l'on donnoit aux dames pour estraines!
Adieu roses, armeries, et boucquets,
Adieu déesses, chantans comme syraines!
Adieu baisers, et plaisance mondaines,
Dont nous portons les douleurs en ce lieu!
Adieu plaisirs, liesses souveraines!
Adieu, bon roy! adieu soit l'ame! adieu!"

These verses run, I think, very easily and gracefully; the last stanza is particularly good.

After more history we come to the next lessons, the first of which is by Justice, and the second by Peace.

Peace says:

"Paix vient de Dieu, et où Dieu est Paix est;
Paix vient d'Amours, et de Justice naist:
Paix hayt guerre, hayne, et division,
Paix fait garder peuple d'effusion
De sang, meurtres, noises et tempestes:
Paix entretient les honneurs et les festes
En joye, doulceur, et en toute union,
Paix et amour si ont communion
À Justice, qui avec eulx s'accorde,
De Paix vient grace, pitié, misericorde,
Bonté, secours, acueil, benignité,
Vertu, lyesse, et toute humilité."

This is a most elaborate lesson. It dives into the deepest recesses of history, and traces causes which we should not have dreamt of. Thus, we hear that Alexander the Great, 'qui fut si hault et renommé vaillant,' loved peace and followed it, by the counsels of Aristotle, 'et grans gens de science;' that Julius Cæsar, who was a great clerk—who reformed the Calendar—who loved learning—who did not say to his chevaliers, 'vous allez y là,' but 'allons y nous tous'—made all his conquests by the acts of peace. These things are worth knowing.

Then the Church sings a lesson, and the last Psalm follows. It is a sort of imitation, not, I believe, designedly profane, of the last Psalm, 'O praise God in His holiness.' Here are two or three of the verses:

"Louez le, dames et damoyselles,
Car en tout bien et tout honneur

Il a soustenu, vos querelles
Grandement en vostre faveur.
Et vous aussi, doulces pucelles,
Qui point n'avez esté contrainctes;
Par meurdres ne par les sequeles
Vous marier en pleurs ne plainctes.
Louez le tous en general
Avecque ses excellents faitz,
Comme protection special
Faisant vivre son peuple en Paix.
Louez le tous, et priez Dieu
En ayant en luy souvenance,
Car exaulsé a en maint lieu
La noble couronne de France,
Vray Dieu puissant et glorieux,
Ottroyez repoz pardurable
À l'ame du très pitéable
Le Roy Charles victorieux."

Besides this piece, 'L'amant rendu cordelier à l'observance d'Amour' is also attributed to Martial de Paris. The Abbé Goujet says of him that he was 'l'homme de son siècle qui écrivoit le mieux et avec le plus d'esprit.' Let us take, then, two more extracts, in a somewhat different style, one of them out of les Vigilles.

The Church has at all times been the favourite subject of satire, but it would be difficult to find lines more bitter than these:

"Au temps heureux, où vescurent nos peres,
On ne vit onc de ces Prothé-notaires,
Qui ont huit, neuf dignités ou prébendes,
Grans abbayes, prieurés et commandes.
Mais qu'en font ils? Ils en font bonne chere.
Qui les dessert? Ils ne s'en soucient guere.
Qui fait pour eux? Un autre tient leur place.
Mais où vont-ils? Ils courent à la chasse.

Et qui lors chante? Un ou deux pauvres moines.
Et les abbés? Ils auroient trop de peine.
De contempler? Ce n'est par la manière.
Et du service? Il demeure derrière.
Ou va l'argent? Il va en gourmandise.
Et du compte? Sont les biens de l'eglise.
Et les offrandes? En chiens et en oyseaux.
Et des habits? Ils sont tous damoyseaux.
Et les rentes? En bains et en luxure.
De prier Dieu? De cela l'on n'a cure.
Et pauvre gens? Ceux là meurent de faim:
Pour leur donner pas un n'ouvre la main.
Ou charité? Est en pelerinage.
Ou est aumosne? Elle va en voyage.
Hé que fait Dieu? il est bien aise ès cieux;
Héquoi! dort-il? L'on n'en fait pis ni mieux."

The scandals of the churchmen, increasing from year to year, reached their height in these years; and as they grew nearer and nearer to their climax and the grand revolution of the sixteenth century, the satire of the laity grew more intensely bitter. Then came the time, a little later than Martial, when to write against the Church was to belong to the new heresy, and popular satire had to hold its tongue or speak low. Erasmus had not yet begun to write, though he was doubtless meditating his Colloquies; and until the advent of Luther, speech was free.

These were good days in the reign of the good king Charles the Seventh; it was, according to Martial, the golden age for France; for then, he says:

"Chascun vivait joyeusement
Selon son estat et mesnage:
L'on pouvait partout seurement
Labourer en son héritage,

Si hardiment que nul outrage
N'eust été fait en place ou voye,
Sur peine d'encourir dommage:
Hélas! le bon temps que j'avoye!

Lors était en la sauve garde
De paix et de tranquillité:
De mal ou danger n'avois garde:
Justice avoit autorité:
Le pauvre estoit autant porté
Que le riche plain de monnoye:
Blez et vins croissoient à planté:
Hélas! le bon temps que j'avoye.

Hé! cuidez vous qu'il faisoit bon
En ces beaux prés, à table ronde,
Et avoir le beau gras jambon,
L'escuelle de poreaux profonde,
Diviser de Margot la blonde
Et puis danser sous la saussoye?
Il n'estoit d'autre joye au monde:
Hélas! le bon temps que j'avoye!

Du temps du feu roy trespassé,
Ne doutois brigans d'un festu:
Je fusse passé, repassé,
Mal habillé, ou bien vestu,
Qu'on ne m'eust pas dit, d'où viens-tu?
Ni demandé que je portoye:
Chemin estoit de gens bastu:
Hélas! le bon temps que j'avoye."

NOTE.—Those who wish for further information on the subject of these cours d'amour, will find a sufficient account of them in Bell's Annotated English Poets, in the introduction to Chaucer's Court of Love. The last court was established by Charles the Sixth, and was a thing of the past when Martial wrote. Probably he collected together decisions and judgments from the courts of France, Provence, and England, and put them into his own form and words.

CHAPTER V.

FRANÇOIS VILLON.

"Peu de Villons en bon savoir,
Trop de Villons pour decepvoir."

FROM time to time along the line of poets, we light upon one whose works are one long expression of his own sorrows or sufferings. To him life is so great a burden, so great a fact, as to obscure and darken his power of perceiving the importance of other facts to millions of other people. He is not necessarily selfish, but his existence is so mighty a thing that he can think and sing of nothing else. He is ill, he is getting old, he has not had the luck of some men, he has sinned, he is sorry. These are the themes of his song. Looking in the eyes of his muse he sings what he sees reflected there—himself. Absorbed by his theme, he is careless of the outer world. Kings and thrones may be overturned, religions and creeds may change, men and manners may be transformed. He notices nothing, being too busily occupied in considering himself.

Towards the latter half of the fifteenth century there lived, one can hardly say flourished, a great vaurien, by

name François Villon. His favourite place of residence was Paris, famous for the loving shelter she has always afforded to the race of "truands."

Little or no hope can commonly be held out to the ordinary rogue of ensuring even a brief and transient memory of his name. Like the nettle by the wayside that stings the children's hands, but is soon forgotten, he commits his petty thieveries and passes away. Nor does any Herrick invite the nettle, as he does the daffodil, to stay, if it be only till the close of day. Long and obscure is the list of these worthies, but it is rare indeed, save in some glorious case like that of Jonathan Wild, that any name or fame remains, to mark the spot where a rogue has lived, and thieved, and died. *Sacro vate carent.* They are forgotten.

But Villon is not forgotten. For, in addition to his natural gifts as a thief, drunkard, spendthrift, and libertine, he possessed the more singular gift of song. Strange to say, he possessed this most excellent gift in a measure far beyond any of his contemporaries. He is the poet of the streets, the genius of Seven Dials, the glory of Whitechapel. His poetry is inspired by repentance. He has sinned; he is used up by excesses, debaucheries, and a hard life. At the age of thirty he draws up his final will and testament, a document of the saddest kind, in which he relates the story of his life; bemoans his wasted opportunities, reflects on the necessity of death, and sadly moralises on the fleeting nature of human greatness.

He has been called gay, Demogeot, in his brief notice of him, says that he was "toujours gai, toujours railleur et

spirituel, mêlant aux saillies de sa joyeuse humeur des traits nombreux d'une sensibilité rêveuse et quelque fois éloquente." This is, to my mind, an entire misconception of the character of the poet. I have read him throughout, and I protest that I cannot find one single spark of real lightheartedness. All is profoundly melancholy. He piles the bitterest reproaches on himself. If he laughs, it is not mirthfully; if he smiles, it is sadly.

But the man so clearly draws himself in his works that one seems to have known him. One pictures a tall thin man, with melancholy deep-set eyes, a long nose—his song of the Gallows-birds proves this to me—stooping shoulders and narrow chest. His chin is short and receding, and the lower part of the face is weak. His forehead is high, but not broad. He is easily depressed by misfortune, and elated by the least gleam of sunshine. His heart is as soft as his will is weak. He gives when he has, borrows when he has not—but forgets to repay; is always going to reform, but never carries out his resolution; when he is not sinning, he is repenting; when he is not crying and smiting his breast, he is drinking and singing with his ruffianly companions. Starting in life with considerable abilities, but no advantages of birth, fortune, or friends; with a weak will, a melancholy temperament, and that kind of mental dependence on others which drives some men to seek any society they can get; he fell among friends of the most dangerous kind. How he hated his life among them—that is, in his repentant moods—and how he despised them—when he was not drinking with them—is abundantly clear from his writings. Why he did not separate from them and

take to better courses is not clear, unless we consider that it is the hardest thing possible for a man to break off evil acquaintance, and almost as hard a thing for a man to give up a bad 'métier' by which, at least, he gets his bread, and to face starvation. Neither of these courses was possible to the luckless Villon. His easy temper made him yield to the persuasions of his friends, and in his reckless moods he allowed himself to be the idol of the pothouse, the song-writer of thieves, the darling of prostitutes. He sinned in the night, repented in the morning, and sinned again. In a grand fit of repentance, sickness, and sorrow, he wrote the Grand Testament. I am fully persuaded that when he got over this exhausting effort of remorse he went back to his old courses, and died, after three or four years more of debauchery, in some friendly monastery. His deathbed, like that of most weak-willed, easily impressed profligates, would probably be most edifying. One can imagine the repentant sinner on his back, surrounded by the exhorting priests. Tears of real sorrow roll down the furrows of his wasted cheek. No confession can be invented full enough to satisfy his abject submission to Holy Church. He renounces all; bids farewell to Jehan Cotard and Colin de Cayeux, who indeed were hanged by this time; shudders at the recollection of Marion and Margot; begs forgiveness of Thibault d'Aussigny, bishop of Orleans, for the many hard things he has said of him; makes the firmest resolution to enter upon a new life, and fortunately dies in the full odour of repentance, before he has had time to forget his sufferings and to break his resolutions.

Theophile Gautier compares him to Lord Byron, chiefly,

I believe, on some fancied resemblance between passages in Don Juan and passages in the Grand Testament. Certainly, in both, there runs a vein of sadness, and with both their mirth is forced and hollow. There is no light-heartedness about Don Juan, and none about Villon. But in the English nobleman we find a cynicism at the world, while in the French "truand" the cynicism is all for himself. He has written one or two ballads which may fairly be ranked with those of Beranger, but he has neither his gaiety nor his power. I have sometimes been reminded of Skelton, with whom he may, so far as his life, be partly compared, but he wants the headlong dash of Skelton, while he far exceeds him in real beauty and power.

Theophile Gautier again compares him with Panurge, and suggests that Villon inspired Rabelais with the "type délicieux de Panurge." It may be so, but Panurge as a character is wholly inferior to what we conceive of Villon. Gautier admits this. "Tout complet que soit Panurge, Villon, cependant l'est encore davantage: il a une mélancolie que l'autre n'a pas, il a le sentiment de sa misère. Quelque chose d'humain lui vibre encore sous les côtes: il aime sa mère .... Panurge n'a pas non plus, pour la beauté de la femme, le même respect amoureux que son prototype...." Villon was a rogue who, in moments of reflection, which were many, hated his own rogueries; Villon was what every educated man must be who falls into the mud of vagabondage; sensitive as he was to every passing feeling, he could not be hardened to the moral deadness of Panurge. He loved his mother; he wrote for her a tender little ballad to the Virgin, he speaks of her

in terms of real affection, he is grateful to his uncle who brought him up, he is grateful to Charles of Orleans who helped him in his greatest trouble, he is grateful to the King who took him out of prison.

Now Panurge would never have been grateful or affectionate to anybody. In the time of the great storm he sincerely laments that he is not with the monks that passed by the day before, so fat and so godly. If there is any danger, he hides; if any fighting, he runs away; but if any stuffing, feasting, drinking, he is foremost. Gratitude, like courage, is utterly strange to him; so are love, filial affection, friendship, and piety. He attaches himself to the great Pantagruel as a powerful protector, and to Friar John as a stalwart comrade. He is as full of tricks as a monkey, and about as trustworthy; he is outrageously animal, and has no notion of using his brains for any other purpose than to help him to animalize himself still more. If he fails, his first thought is revenge; if he succeeds, his return to those who helped him is forgetfulness. If the great work of Rabelais be a carefully devised and cunningly wrought-out allegory (which I do not believe), then is Panurge the representative of man without a soul. All is there—desires, wants, passions, reason, and memory. Only there is utterly wanting what we call conscience—soul—that side of man, as Professor Newman defined it, by which we see God. God to Panurge was not, because it had never been given him to know God. But Villon—Villon was all conscience. His melancholy soul administered perpetual castigations. Panurge was joyous and free from remorse; Villon was sad and full of self-reproach. Panurge looks ever for what may be; Villon

looks back at what might have been. Panurge was imperfect only on the side of conscience; Villon only on the side of will. Panurge was anything in the world, except François Villon.

The real story of Villon's life is briefly this.

He was born at Paris in 1431, the same year that saw the burning of Joan of Arc. He was of poor origin, his father being a 'cordonnier.' Shewing, one may suppose, evidences of ability he was entered at the University of Paris, where at an early age he became riotous, debauched, and indolent. He appears to have left the University, and joined a troop of wandering gallants, who lived, from hand to mouth, a life of lawless vagabondage. In 1456 he went to Angers, where he wrote "Le Petit Testament," a work to which we shall return presently; the next year he returned to Paris, where he was shut up in the Chatelet for some unknown offence, and condemned to be hanged. Luckily he thought of making an appeal, which proved successful, through the good offices of Charles of Orleans, a firm friend to his brother poets of whatever degree. While in prison he wrote one of his best ballads, the "Song of the Hanged." He was pardoned, but banished, and we hear no more of him until we find him arrested by Thibault d'Aussigny, bishop of Orleans, no one knows why, and kept in prison a whole summer by that dignitary on a diet of bread and water. The bread and water diet was never forgotten by Villon, who was little accustomed to either, except on compulsion, and in his "Grand Testament" he remembers his ancient enemy. Louis XI. took him out of prison, and then he wrote his "Grand Testament." After that—no one

knows. Rabelais says that he retired "sur ses vieux jours soubs la faveur d'ung homme de bien;" also that he went to England and enjoyed the protection of Edward the Fourth. I have given above my own belief about his death. Still there are two pieces in his style attributed to him, one of which mentions the defeat of Charles the Bold at Nancy in 1477, and the other must have been written after 1480, when the corps of archers was abolished. But, like all popular poets, he had a great many imitators, and a number of poems were attributed to him in which he probably had no share at all.

The only works of his about which there is no doubt, are the Petit and the Grand Testament, with the songs and ballads of the latter; half-a-dozen ballads may be appended, and the Jargon, which is written in 'argot,' and which no man can understand. There are also the *Repues Franches*, which are in his style, but probably not by him; the *Dialogue between MM. de Mallepaye and De Baillevent*, and the *Monologue of the Free Archer*, which must have been written after Villon was sixty years of age. Now I think it very improbable that our deboshed poet got much past his thirtieth year.

His great popularity is certain from the fact that between 1489 and 1542 there were no less than thirty editions of his works. He was revived two hundred years later and published in 1723, again in 1742, then in 1832, and lastly in 1867.

The secret of his popularity was his reality; he was the first poet who sung of life as it was; he chanted the streets, the sufferings of the poor, the villainies of the thieves, and

the repentance of a vulgar sinner. He accidentally discovered—he, the first—the poetical side of misery, and, as Demogeot says, he sings it not "pour nous apitoyer, mais parcequ'il était poëte." Nothing is too low for his muse. Hear what he says on himself and his companions, waiting to be hanged. There is a sort of forced laugh about it, somewhat horrible to listen to.

"Brother mortals who live after us, harden not your hearts against us, for if you have pity on us poor men, God will have more mercy towards you. Here you see us tied up, five—six. As for the flesh that we took too much care of, that is long since devoured and rotted; and as to our bones, we are becoming cinder and powder. Let no man laugh at our misfortunes, but pray God that He may absolve us all.

"If we call you brothers do not on that account disdain us, although we were slain by justice; you know that all men have not got good natural sense. Intercede then without bitterness towards the Son and the Virgin Mary, that His grace may not be tarnished for us, preserving us from the flames of hell. We are dead; let no one insult us, but pray God that He may absolve us all.

"The rain has soaped us and washed us, and the sun has dried us and blackened us. Pies and crows have plucked out our eyes, and torn away our beards and eyebrows. Never do we sit down to repose at all. Here and there, just as the wind changes, at its own pleasure it carries us about. Pecked at by birds, more than the thimble by the needle. O men—here, at least, do not mock, but pray God that He may absolve us all."

With what a rueful smile must the condemned prison-bird have pictured the last stage of his and his companions' sojourn on the earth! Here we are, half-a-dozen in a row, all tied up together, swinging about, and we never sit down. Pray God absolve us all!

But the man who could so write could not possibly have been a wholly bad man.

Here is another piece, when he moralizes on death.

He goes into a charnel-house—"Ah!" he says, "here is no laughter and no play. What is it worth to these to have lain in warm beds, to have drunk good wine, to have lived joyously in fêtes and dances?... All these heads—what were they? Bishops and judges, street-porters and servants. Some who bullied, some who crouched; here they are, all in a mass, pêle-mêle. Well, they are dead. God have their souls! As for their bodies, they are rotten—although they have been lords and ladies delicately nurtured on cream, and meal, and rice. And their bones are turned into powder, where there is neither warmth, nor pleasure, nor laughter. Please, Sweet Jesus, absolve them!"

Here is his philosophy:[1]

"Looking through a chink in the wall I saw a fat canon sitting on a soft couch, in a warm and comfortable room, drinking Hypocras day and night; and by his side the lady Sydoine, white, tender, and polished.... il n'est trésor que de vivre à son aise. If Franc Gontier and his companion Helen had enjoyed this pleasant life... would they have praised sleeping under a rose-bush—and is it not better to sleep in a bed! il n'est trésor que de vivre à son

[1] Les contredits de Franc Gontier. See below.

aise.... I don't care if all the birds from here to Babylon live on coarse bread, oat and barley cake, and drink water all the year round—they would not keep me to such a life a single day—no, nor a single morning. Oh! let Franc Gontier, and Helen with him, please themselves under the eglantine, in the name of God, if they so wish—it is no business of mine—but whatever be the mêtier of labourers in the fields, il n'est tresor que de vivre à son aise."

Before proceeding to a consideration of his productions in detail, I am reminded of an anecdote of Villon, related by Rabelais. The story, of which I should like not to believe one single word, is so illustrative not only of the peculiar notions of fun prevalent in those joyous times, but also of the opinion which the world had of Villon, that I extract it at length. The significance of the thing is not so much in its truth, as in the fact that such a story could have been told of such a man as Villon. There are (to quote the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table) three Johns, namely, John as he appears to his friends, John as he is, and John as he would be. Villon shows us in his writings John as he was, and John as he would be; but he has not shown us John as his friends thought him. This is what Rabelais shows us.

"Master Francis Villon, in his old age, retired to St. Maxent in Poictou, under the patronage of a good honest abbot of the place. Then, to make sport for the mob, he undertook to get 'the Passion' acted after the way, and in the dialect of the country. The parts being distributed, the play having been rehearsed, and the stage prepared.... there only wanted properties and necessaries, but chiefly clothes fit for the parts.

"Villon, to dress an old clownish father grey-beard, begged of Friar Stephen Tickletoby, sacristan to the Franciscan friars of the place, to lend him a cope and stole..... Tickletoby peremptorily bid him provide himself elsewhere, if he would, and not to hope for anything out of his monastical wardrobe.' Villon gave an account of this to the players as of a most abominable action, adding that God would shortly revenge Himself, and make an example of Tickletoby.

"The Saturday following he had notice given him, that Tickletoby, upon the filly of the convent, was gone a-mumping to St. Ligarius, and would be back about two in the afternoon. Knowing this, he made a cavalcade of his devils of 'the Passion' through the town. They were all rigged with wolves', calves', and rams' skins, laced and trimmed with sheeps' heads, bulls' feathers, and large kitchen tenterhooks, girt with broad leathern girdles, whereat hanged dangling huge cowbells and horsebells which made a horrid din.... Having led them about, to the great diversion of the mob, and the dreadful fear of little children, he finally carried them to an entertainment at a summer-house, without the gate that leads to St. Ligarius.

"As they came near the place, he espied Tickletoby afar off, coming home from mumping, and told them in macaronic verse:

> "Hic est de patria natus, de gente belistra,
> Qui 'solet antiquo bribas portare bisacco."

"'A plague on his friarship,' said the devils then; 'the lousy beggar would not lend a poor cope to the fatherly father. Let us fright him.'

"'Well said,' cried Villon, 'but let us hide till he comes by, and then charge him home briskly with your squibs and burning sticks.'

"Tickletoby being come to the place, they all rushed on a sudden into the road to meet him, and in a frightful manner threw fire from all sides upon him and his filly foal, ringing and tingling their bells, and howling like so many real devils: 'Hho, hho, hho, hho, rrou, rrours, rrrourrs, hoo, hou, hho, hho, hho i. Friar Stephen, don't we play the devils rarely?'

"The filly was soon scared out of her seven senses, and began to start, to funk it, to trot it, to bound it, to gallop it, to kick it, to spurn it, to calcitrate it, to wince it, to frisk it, to leap it, to curvet it, with double jerks, insomuch that she threw down Tickletoby... Now his straps and stirrups were of cord, and on the right side his sandals were so entangled and twisted that he could not for the heart's blood of him get out his foot. Thus was he dragged about by the filly through the road... she still multiplying her kicks against him, and straying for fear over hedges and ditches, insomuch that she trepanned his thick skull so, that his cockle brains were dashed out near the Hosanna, or high cross. Then his arms fell to pieces, one this way and one that; and even so were his legs served; and she being got to the convent, brought back only his right foot and twisted sandal, leaving them to guess what had become of the rest.

"Villon, seeing that things had succeeded as he intended, said to his devils:

"'You will act rarely, gentlemen devils, you will act rarely. I dare engage you will top your parts.'"

Poor Tickletoby! in this unexpected manner, and on his way home from mumping!

One wonders if Villon really did it. But this was the notion entertained by the world generally of the long-nosed, melancholy poet.

The *Petit Testament*, written at the age of twenty-five, consists of forty-five eight-lined stanzas, and contains some twenty-five legacies. I confess I find it rather dull.

He begins by saying that in order to get out of the way of love and of a cruel mistress, who causes him more than the average amount of torture, he intends going to Angers, there, if necessary, to die the death of a martyr to love.

To Master William Villon he leaves his reputation—a most valuable gift. To his mistress, of course, his heart. He orders that his three poor little adopted children, all without shoes or clothes—'as naked as worms'—shall be provided for, at least till winter. He directs that one friend, in prison for a bill of six sous, shall be released—when he has paid it; that another shall be presented with his old breeches, out of which he humorously suggests that a headdress may be made for the said friend's mistress; that another shall receive an acorn from a willow, and other equally attainable things; to two more he offers the choice of a half of his personal property, or a farthing each, whichever they please; to poor and distressed prisoners he offers the gallows, with a daily quart of the best Seine water, and recommends them to the good graces of the jailor's wife; the hospitals may have his chests, full of spiders' webs; his barber may have the cuttings of his hair; and the orders of Mendicant Friars and the Beguines are to

have lots of good cheer, with a strong recommendation to preach, on a full stomach, the signs of the end of the world.

Then he finishes. "Made at the hour above named, by the famous Villon, who eats neither figs nor dates; who is as dry and as black as a baker's broom; who has neither tent nor pavilion, but nothing at all save a little copper money, which will soon come to an end."

Much of the satire has evaporated out of this production, by reason of age and the mortality of his friends, Villon being the only one of the confraternity now remembered. Some little remains, however, and I dare say at the time it was a masterpiece of wit.

Let us, however, turn to the *Grand Testament*, a very much superior production.

"Le Grand Testament" consists of no less than one hundred and seventy-three stanzas, interspersed with sixteen ballads.

He begins by abusing the bishop of Orleans, who had put him in prison. As, however, it is right to pray for one's enemies, and as Villon, if not a Christian, is nothing, he promises to recite for him the seventh verse of the Psalm *Deus laudem*. The seventh verse of this Psalm (109) is, according to our Prayer-Book version, "Let his days be few, and let another take his office." Lat. *episcopatum*.

As King Louis the Eleventh took him out of prison, he cannot help devoting three or four stanzas of gratitude to that monarch. These really appear to be heartfelt thanks to the memory of the bread and water. Among other blessings, he prays that the good king may have twelve children, all sons, and all as puissant as Charlemagne.

He then laments his own sins, and relates the story of the pirate Diomedes and Alexander (which he says he got out of Valerius, but which is not there) by way of some small excuse for himself; then resumes his theme. "I lament," he says, "the time of my youth in which, more than any other man, I have acted the libertine, up to the commencement of old age, for my youth has left me. It has not gone away on foot, nor on horseback. Alas! how then? It has suddenly flown away, and left me nothing at all.

"Gone it is, and I remain poor in sense and in knowledge, sad, discouraged, blacker than a Moor. I have no money, no rents, no possessions. The meanest of my family, I say the truth, hastens to disown me by reason of my want of a little fortune.... Ah, God! if I had studied in the time of my foolish youth, and given myself to good manners, I should have had house and soft bed; but what?—I ran away from school like a truant child. In writing this, my heart almost is breaking.... Where are the joyous gallants whom I followed in days gone by—who sang so well, and talked so well, so pleasant in deeds and words? Some are dead and stiff; is there anything left of them now? May these have respite in paradise, and God save the remainder! And others are become great seigneurs and lords, thank God—others are naked beggars, and only see bread through the windows; while others, again, are entered into the cloisters of the Celestines and the Chartreux, booted and shod like oyster-fishers. See the different conditions between them!"

After this he consoles himself under his poverty, by the

reflection that after all it is better to be a living beggar than a dead seigneur. As for that, we must all die.

"Certainly I know I am not—I consider it well—the son of an angel bearing a diadem of this or that star. My father is dead; God keep his soul: as for his body, it is in the tomb. I know that my mother will die, and the poor woman knows it too very well, and her son will not remain. I know that rich and poor, foolish and wise, priest and layman, noble and villain, generous and sordid, little and big, ugly and beautiful, ladies with high collars, of whatever condition, wearing ornaments and hoods, death seizes all without exception. Whether Paris dies, or Helen—whoever dies, dies with pain. He who loses breath, the bitterness of gall breaks over his heart; then he feels heaven knows what sweat; and there is no one who may alleviate his sufferings, for he has neither children nor brother nor sister, who then could be his pledge... Oh! woman's body, so tender, so polished, so soft, so precious, must thou these pains expect? Yes, or else go to the skies alive." Then follows a delicious ballad, in which he asks where are the fair women of old. I give it in the original:

I.

"Dictes moy, où, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora la belle Romaine?
Archipiada, ne Thais
Qui fut sa cousine germaine?
Echo parlant quand bruyt on maine
Dessus rivière, ou sus[1] estan:
Qui beaulté eut trop plus qu'humaine?
Mais ou sont les neiges d'autan[2]?

[1] sus = sur.

[2] autan, ante annum, "Where are last year's snows?" It is a pity

II.

Où est la trés sage Heloïs—
Pour qui fut battu et puys Moine,
Pierre Esbaillart, à sainct Denys?
Pour son amour eut cest essoyne. (malheur).
Semblablement où est la Royne,
Qui commanda que Buridan
Fut jetté, en ung sac, en Seine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'autan?

III.

La Royne blanche comme ung lys,
Qui chantait à voix de Sireine:
Berthe au grand pied, Biétris, Allys:
Harembourges qui tint le Mayne:
Et Jehanne la bonne Lorraine,
Qu'Angloys bruslèrent à Rouen:
Où sont elles, vierge souveraine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'autan?

ENVOI.

Prince, n'enquerez de sepmaine,
Où elles sont, ne de cest an,
Que ce refrain ne vous remaine,
Mais où sont les neiges d'autan?"

Two more ballads, similarly conceived, follow, but this is certainly the most musical of the three. Some of the fair women of Villon are not so well known as those of Tennyson. Prompsault, in his edition of Villon, gives notes of these names. "La reine blanche" was Blanche of Bourbon, wife of Peter the Cruel. "Berthe au grand pied"

that this word is obsolete. Panurge being asked where his diamonds are which the bashaw gave him, says, "By St. John, they are a good way hence, if they always keep going. But where is the last year's snow? This was the greatest care that Villon took."

was the mother of Charlemagne, and the subject of a well-known romance. She was six feet in stature. Esbaillart is his way of writing Abelard. "La bonne Lorraine" is of course Joan of Arc.

Since then, Popes, Kings, Princes, all die, Villon sees really no reason for doubting that he himself will die. Then he bethinks him of old age, and especially what a thing old age must be to women who have been beautiful and young and happy. His repentance is only skin-deep after all, and in the midst of his own lamentations his thoughts fly to the old women in rags squatted round a fire, and to their past days of love and joy. So that he stays his breast-smiting to write a ballad, which, to my mind, has hardly been surpassed in his own line, except by Béranger. He calls it "Les Regrets de la belle Heaulmière, jà parvenue à la Vieillesse."

It cannot all be quoted. Read a little of it:

"Advis m'est que j'oy regretter
La belle qui fut Heaulmière:
Soy jeune fille souhaiter,
Et parler en ceste manière:
Ha! vieillesse felonne et fière,
Pour quoy m'as si tost abattue?
Qui me tient? qui? que ne me fière (frappe)
Et qu'à ce coup, je ne me tue?"

"Thou hast taken away the rights and privileges that beauty had given to me over clerks, merchants, and ecclesiastics, for there was no man born who would not have given me all his wealth, whatever repentance followed after, if only I had given to him what prudes refuse.

"Many a man who was not greatly to my liking I have

refused, for the love of a crafty lad, to whom I made great largesse. By my soul I loved him well, and he never did anything for me but rudeness, and only loved me for what I had. Yet he could never illtreat me enough to prevent my loving him; even if he dragged me along the ground, if he told me to kiss him and forget all my troubles, if the villain only embraced me, I was better pleased than ever. What remains to me of it? Shame and sin. Well, he is dead thirty years ago, and I am old and white. When I think, alas! of the good time, what I was, what I am become—when I look at myself and see myself so changed, poor, dry, shrivelled, and thin, I am almost driven mad. . .

"Qu'est devenu ce front poly,
Ces cheveulx blonds, sourcils voultyz, (arched)
Grand entr'œil, le regard joly
Dont prenoye les plus subtils:
Ce beau nez droit, grand ni petit:
Cez petites joinctes oreilles:
Menton fourchu, cler vis, traictis
Et ces belles levres vermeilles?"

"My front is wrinkled, my hair is grey, my eyebrows gone, the eyes extinct that darted looks and smiles, by which so many merchants were attracted; my nose is hooked, once so beautiful; my ears are hanging and spotted, my face pale, dead, and discoloured, my chin projects, and my lips are skinny. . . . .

"Ainsi le bon temps regrettons
Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes,
Assises bas, à croppetons, (squatted down)
Tout en ung tas comme pelottes:
A petit feu de chenevottes
Tost allumées, tost estainctes:

Et jadis fusmes si mignottes;
Ainsi en prend à maintz et maintes."

Poor old creatures! squatting round a fire of hemp stalks that goes out as soon as lit. Well may they regret "le beau temps, quand elles furent si mignottes." Will age ever cease to look back on the spring-time of youth, and hope, and love, and careless squandering? Villon barely hides the belief common to all spendthrifts, that a joyous youth is worth a poor and comfortless old age. This unlucky ne'er-do-well has found the chord which, touched with ever so unskilful a hand, moves all men's hearts.

Now, getting altogether astray from his first good and edifying meditations, he gives a ballad of advice addressed by the old Heaulmière to her younger sisters, in which one remarks that affliction only makes the poor old thing more worldly and more wicked. He then offers a sort of apology for the frailty of women, a subject in which he was only too deeply versed. Recovering from this temporary backsliding, he sets forth a ballad on love, of which the burden is "bien heureux est qui rien n'y a." In this he fortifies his position by examples drawn from history; quoting Solomon, Samson, qui "en perdit ses lunettes;" Orpheus "le doux menestrier," Narcissus, Sardana, the preux Chevalier, who conquered the kingdom of Crete—probably Saladin; David, that sage Prophet; Herod, and, finally, himself and his own misfortunes when he was beaten, like the linen in the stream, for the sake of Catherine of Vauselles.

Then he speaks of the sufferings and deceits of love; renounces love; has another 'dig' at his enemy the bishop; and commences a bran-new Will, revoking his first.

In the name of God, he begins, but stopping to mention that, before the coming of our Lord, all souls were lost, he makes exception in favour of patriarchs and prophets, proving his exception, which was against the teaching of some of the preachers of his time, in this curious way. If, he says, Dives and Lazarus were both in flames, and if Dives had seen that Lazarus's finger was burning, he would not have asked him to dip it in water and put it in his mouth. "Bad place," meditates Villon, gravely, "for hard drinkers."

He gives his soul to the Holy Trinity, his body to mother earth, where he says the worms will not find very much fat, for hunger has made too hard war upon it; to his more than father, William de Villon, he leaves his library; to his mother, who has had for him so much bitter grief, God knows, and many a sorrow, he leaves a ballad to the Virgin, having no castle, nor fortress, nor place of retreat to go to when affliction falls on him; and his poor mother, he says, has none either.

Here are the first and third stanzas of the hymn. The third is perfect in its way.

"Dame des cieux, régente terrienne,
Empérière des infernaulx palux,
Recevez moy vostre humble chrestienne,
Que comprinse soye entre vos esleuz,
Ce non obstant qu'onques rien ne valuz.
Les bienz de vous, ma dame et ma maitresse,
Sont trop plus grans que ne suis pécheresse:
Sans lesquel biens ame ne peult mérir[1]
N'entrer ès cieulx; je n'en suis menteresse,
En ceste foy je vueil vivre et mourir.

Femme je suis povrette et ancienne,
Ne riens ne sçay: oncques lettre ne leuz;

[1] morir, meriter.

Au moustier voy, dont suis parroissienne,
Paradis painct, ou sont harpes et luz,
Et ung enfer, ou damnéz sont boulluz,
L'ung me faict paour, l'autre joye et liesse. (lætitia)
La joye avoir faict moy haulte déesse
A qui pescheurs doivent tous recourir,
Combléz de foy sans faincte ni paresse:
En cette foy je veuil vivre et mourir."

Observe the singular religion shewn in this hymn. It was written some fifty years before the dawn of the Reformation. The writer has no notion of religion, but as an escape from the pains of sense to the pleasures of sense; no chance of escape but in the good offices of the Empress of the Infernal marshes. But the lines "Femme je suis . ." are exquisitely simple and touching.

To his Rose he leaves no money, but a ballad, which I confess I cannot appreciate.

Then comes a long list of small legacies resembling those in the Petit Testament. Then a Ballad and Prayer for Maitre Jehan Cotard.

Then more legacies, and a pretty little song for a gentleman newly married, which he may send to his bride, won by the sword.

The next Ballad is a furious curse on venomous tongues. Most persons of Villon's mode of life have suffered greatly from venomous tongues.

Then we have the 'Contredits of Franc Gontier,' which I have partly translated above. Franc Gontier had written in praise of a pastoral life, which Villon here contemns.

Then follows a very curious little poem, 'Des femmes de Paris,' which trips along with such a gay and pleasant air, that I copy it out.

"Quoy qu'on tient belles langagières
Genevoises, Veniciennes,
Assez pour être messaigères,
Et mêmement les anciennes:
Mais soient Lombardes, Rommaines,
Florentines, à mes perilz,
Pymontoises, Savoysiennes,
Il 'est bon bec que de Paris.

De beau parler tiennent chargères,
Ce dit-on, les Appolitaines,
Et que bonnes sont cacquetoères
Almansas, et Bruciennes:
Soient Grecques, Egyptiennes,
De Hongrie ou d'autre pays,
Espaignolles, ou Castellanes,
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

Brettes, Suysses n'y scavent guères
Ne Gasconnes et Tholouzunnes:
De Petit Pont deux harangères
Les concluront: et les Lorraines
Anglesches, ou Callaisiennes:
Ay je beaucoup de lieux compris?
Picardes: de Valenciennes:—
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris.

ENVOI.

Prince aux dames Parisiennes
De bien parler donnez le prix;
Quoy qu'on die d'Italiennes,
Il n'est bon bec que de Paris."

Note here the long list he gives, chiefly from different parts of France. Gascony, Calais, Brittany, Thoulouse, Picardy, Valenciennes, Geneva,—all mixed up together as his geographical knowledge served him, or the rhyme demanded. *Langagières* explains itself; *messaigières* probably means bearers of love messages; *tiennent chargères*, give

lessons; *cacquetoères* is interpreted *talkers*, and *Appolitaines* is *Neapolitans*. Villon's knowledge of names is especially weak, as when he speaks of Sardana, meaning, I suppose, not Sardanapalus, whom he names at full length in another part of his writings, but Saladin, as has been suggested.

Apropos of his own song, he says:

"Come and look at the women sitting two and three together on the lower fold of their gowns, in the convents and the churches; come close and don't change your place. You will find that never did Macrobius make such fine decisions. Listen; carry away something of what they say. It is all good advice."

Of 'la grosse Margot' he says:

"Je l'ayme de propre nature,
Et elle moy, là doulce sade,
Qui la trouvera d'adventure,
Qu'on luy lise leste ballade."

The ballad, one of the most remarkable that he has written, cannot be quoted. It is a half-bold, half-ashamed description of a life which poor Villon knew only too well. He brazens it out, he does not pretend to hate it, but though he is ashamed of himself, he puts on his most reckless air, folds his arms, and sings out, breaking down a little at intervals of his life "dans la taverne ou tenons nostre estat."

After a few more legacies, in which he remembers Marion l'Ydolle, and la grande Jehanne de Bretaigne, formerly friends of his, he reads what he calls a 'Belle Leçon de Villon aux enfants perdus,' followed by a ballad of good doctrine to persons of bad life.

This is very good. The first verse is thus:

"Well, be a smuggler of Bulls if you like, or a cheat and blackleg at dice, or a coiner of false money—you only burn yourself like those who are put into the boiling cauldrons[1] —perverse traitors, void of faith; be a thief, robber, and pickpocket—where go your gains, think you? Tout aux tavernes et aux filles."

The last line is the burden of the song.

Then, getting very serious, he goes to the cemetery of the Innocents, and seeing the piles of bones heaped in the charnel-house, he moralizes on them. But I have already given these lines above.

Then follow the concluding words of his testament.

Here is a sort of Requiescat:

"Repos éternal donne à cil, (celui)
Sire, clarté perpétuelle,
Qui vaillant, plat n'y escuelle
N'eut oncques, n'ung brin de percil. (parsley)
Il fut rez, chef, barbe, sourcil,
Comme ung navet qu'on racle et pelle.
Repos, etc."

And in the last Ballad, finishes:

"Ici se clost le testament,
Et finist le pouvre Villon.
Venez à son enterrements,
Quant vous orez le carillon,
Vestuz, rouges com vermillion,
Car en amours mourut martyr:
Ce jura il, sur son chaignon
Quand de ce monde voult partir."

[1] A cheerful punishment adopted at that time for the more effectual striking of terror into false coiners.

Besides these poems there are a few ballads remaining, one of which on the hanged men I have already quoted. The rest do not offer anything very remarkable.

The "Jargon et Jobelin de Villon" has never been disputed to be his, but it is written in wholly unintelligible "argot." Even Marot confesses that he cannot understand it. It is printed in the edition of Prompsault, with notes which he confesses to be only conjectural. The curious may find it in that edition, and may essay to read it. For myself, I tried to read the first stanza of the first ballad, and gave it up. But there is very little profit in trying to decipher Thieves' Latin.

Printed with Villon's poems is a curious little collection called "Les Répues Franches," or, as we may translate it, "The Free Feeds," shewing how Villon and his companions obtained, without gold or silver, fish, tripe, bread, wine, and roast.

The purchases are made very ingeniously. Thus, he goes to the baker and orders half-a-dozen of his best loaves to be prepared immediately. As soon as half the quantity is ready, he bids the baker's man follow with the basket. Arrived at the door of a nobleman's house, he tells him that this is the place, and that he may leave the first half and go back for the rest. As soon as the man has turned the corner, he takes off the basket to his companions joyously.

But they want wine. He gets two jars exactly alike, and fills one with water. At the merchant's he demands the jar full of his best red wine, which is given him. But he then pretends that he ordered white wine, and will not

take the red. Giving them back the jar full of water, he shoulders the other and exits hastily.

It took two to get the meat; one had to buy, and the other to come up and quarrel with the purchaser. In the scuffle they carry off the beef.

I cannot avoid quoting the words of St. Beuve on Villon. He says: "Under a favourable climate, among a childish people poetry commences by having herself the candour of childhood; she believes for a long time in the golden age; she continues always to believe in the charms of a clear sky and in the delights of nature. With us, on the contrary, Villon hurries off the muse to the cabaret and the gallows; at the very hour of her birth he disenchants her of those darling illusions, teaches her his own easy morals, and fashions her to those manners, just a little bold, that she will never henceforth lose. Some modesty will come upon her perhaps with age; but familiarity, mischief, and a penchant for raillery, will always recur at moments. Dignity and nobility of tone will have their turn, but the old French gaiety will have its relapses, and sentiment will not extinguish mockery."

The influence of Villon on Marot, and of Marot on La Fontaine, is so great, and the fact that Villon begins a new school is so important, that these remarks are well worthy of attention. Still, one cannot help feeling that the 'penchant pour le badinage' of the French muse is due more to the French spirit than to the influence of Villon.

But, if he was not without imitators, he was without predecessors. His style is his own; he is no copyist, no disciple of a school. He was the poet of the people, but

not the advocate of the people. He had the most profound ignorance of any theories, political or social. The only problem he attempted to solve was that simple difficulty of getting meat and drink for himself, and a little money for Margot; he described what he saw, and had no thought that the old state of things would alter. Even printing was not introduced into Paris till after his death, and perhaps Villon never even saw a printed book. Had he lived in these days, he would have been a clever literary Bohemian; probably would have written for the magazines, smoked strong Cavendish, drunk beer, and gone to bed late. And I should say that at no possible period would life be successful for a man of Villon's character.

As for the story told by Rabelais, there is this to be said. Early in the fifteenth century was established what was called the "Confrérie de la Passion." The society used periodically to enact the mystery of the Passion of our Lord. An account of this, for which we have no space, is given in any work on the French Literature of the time. The mystery was an extraordinary favourite. Devils, who occupied the lowest stage, expressed their rage and terror at the Suffering of our Lord, while this was actually set forth before the folk.[1] In course of time the enacting of the play causing some scandal, it was forbidden, except at New Year's day. Now such a man as Villon would find a huge pleasure in taking an active part in any such thing as this. The coarse contrast between the Heaven and the Hell of the stage; the humorous antics of the devils; the

[1] Judas was once or twice actually finished off and hung in earnest, through the pious zeal of the actors.

semi-religious nature of the ceremony, apt to comfort the soul of a sinner, all would have their charms for him, and I am half-disposed to think that there may have been some grounds for the story of the signal example of Friar Tickle-toby.

The great dramatic rage, however, during the life of Villon was for moralities. These pieces, at which our poet must have yawned drearily, were allegorical and elaborate. The virtues and vices contended with each other. Nothing so vulgar as a devil daintily hung round with tenter-hooks, calves' skins and suchlike ornaments was admitted. The performances appear to have been strictly moral, and fearfully, inexpressibly dull.

Then came a livelier time, and an indignant populace, weary of moral allegory, demanded something in a lighter style. But this was after Villon. Would that he had been in the prime of his years, when Patelin inaugurated a new era for popular dramatic literature!

Was François Villon the actual prototype of Pierre Gringoire? Did Victor Hugo, when he wrote Nôtre Dame de Paris, take Villon for his Gringoire, and find his vocabulary of Parisian slang in Villon's Jargon? Certainly, all his words, and an immense number more, are in the Jargon. And there are many points of curious resemblance between Gringoire and Villon—only, Villon would not, could not have earned his livelihood by balancing chairs on his chin. I leave this point for the investigation of the curious. There was, however, a Pierre Gringoire of the sixteenth century, who wrote much poetry, of a sort now forgotten, and curious plays, still remembered.

CHAPTER VI.

ROGER DE COLLERYE—BAUDE—GUILLAUME ALEXIS.

COLLERYE was the great poet of the Fête aux fous; the friend of *Basochiens* and the *Clercs du Chastelet;* the joyous spirit of a small country circle; the illustrious Roger Bontemps. Time has somewhat tarnished the lustre of his fame, but he is not yet without an admirer, and he has found in these latter days an editor who does him more than justice. Hear what M. Charles de Héricault writes of him. "He has left," he says, "a mark in history which will never be effaced; his is the most singular personality among the poets of the commencement of the sixteenth century; his life and his genius furnish documents most useful to the philosophy of the literary history of his time. He has created a national type, a type dear to the French esprit; that which represents this esprit in its condition of calm and joyous leisure, the type of Roger Bontemps. In this personage he has introduced, so to speak, the symbol of joy among the vine-growers of Burgundy. All the followers of the Abbé des Fous of Auxerre; all the *Basochiens*, clerks of the Chastelet, enfans sans souci; all

the grand family of philosophers, shoeless and hungry; all the acolytes of the Mère Folle were his comrades; and all those fools, arch-fools, lunatics, heteroclytes, poets of nature, and the rest of the legitimate children of Roger Bontemps recognised their idol in the joviality and joyous poverty of Roger de Collerye."

Thus far M. Charles d'Héricault. Less enthusiastic readers of Roger de Collerye may be disposed to think this praise exaggerated. Certainly, in the town where he lived, and his own district, he seems to have enjoyed great reputation, and to have been the leader of all those country fêtes when rough wit and license had their full swing. But when he deserts his own line, when he tries to fall in with the fashion of the time, and to write after the style of Marot, he fails. He is Roger Bontemps, or he is nothing. His life is soon told. He was a genuine Bohemian; one of that happy class who love to feast one day, if they have to starve six; to be Perpetual Grand of the Glorious Apollos, the roystering leader of all the songs, and the chief maker of all the jokes, careless that next day will bring headache and repentance, dry bread and cold water; with bitter accusations against Fortune, who will not let men eat their cake and have it. Poor Roger could not endure with patience the evil which naturally fell upon him, and bellowed loudly when his credit failed him. Like almost all the verse-writers of his time, he laments, in his old age, the sins of his youth, and bewails, not without reason, the folly of his misspent time.

He appears to have been a native of Paris, though he says himself:

"Je suis Bontemps, qui d' Angleterre
Suis ici venu de grant' erre
En ce pays de l' Auxerrois."

Which must be taken dramatically. But why should Bontemps be said to come from England? Was it from some popular rumours of the plenty and good cheer of the English?

He spent most of his life at Auxerre, where he was secretary to two successive bishops. This semi-ecclesiastical post did not inspire him with gravity. Quite the contrary. His youth was reckless, joyous, *orageuse;* enemies *Plate Bourse* and *Faulte d' Argent* not yet being in sight. At Gurgy, the residence of a patron, Monseigneur de Gurgy, whom he calls Bacchus, he fell in with some of the members of *la Basoche*, for whom he made his *cris* in after time. There, we may understand, were great roysterings and singings. There was arranged in verses, for the grand day of the 18th of July, the fête aux Fous, all the little gossip of the town, to be spouted in front of the cathedral by my Lord the Abbé des Fous and his band. This day Roger called *Débride-gosier*, or *Tongue-let-loose.* At Auxerre Roger falls in love. His love M. Héricault declares to have been of the purest and loftiest order. I do not know why, except that he addresses his mistress an acrostic and sundry verses in the modern style. Her name was Gilleberte de Beaurepaire. But, alas! ambition, ever the most fatal to the purest and the loftiest souls, stung our Roger, and not content with the distinctions he had won in the country, he must needs sigh for the good things of the court. The way of it was this. In an evil moment Roger indited a

letter to Marot, the king of poets, as he calls him. He congratulates him on his works, which he styles *à peu près déifícques*, and especially commends his fortune, because "le roy ne manque à bien remplir sa bourse." Marot answered affably, even with compliments, and Roger, giving up his secretaryship, packed up his poems—one easily imagines that he had not much else to pack—and went off to Paris. Here the usual story has to be told; waiting, hope, flattery, and disappointment. M. d'Héricault finds that he fell from what he would have us believe was his pristine purity; that he contracted a new love, by no means so pure as that of Gilleberte, and that his mind, degraded by this alliance, lost its old ideal of woman, and fell back upon material, coarse, and vulgar notions. The truth, as I apprehend it, was that Roger never had that lofty ideal; that, in writing to Gilleberte, he wrote in the fashion of the day, and not from his own heart; and that his ideas on all subjects were coarse and material, in youth as well as in age. Then he went back, in disgust and poverty, to Auxerre, where, *Plate Bourse* and *Faulte d'Argent* finding him out, he lost credit at the taverns, had no money to buy him wine, and began to lament over his empty coffers and thirsty throat. As his editor says: "Roger n'a connu que cette sorte de souffrance qui pique le corps .... les combinaisons matérielles qui peuvent produire la souffrance font le siège de sa maigre échine."

His writings are not very numerous. Doubtless a great number have perished. There remains, however, a collection of Epistles, Rondeaux, Complaints, Ballads, Epithetons, Dictons, and Epitaphs; a *Satyre* for the people of Auxerre,

"Le Blason des Dames," a Sermon for a Marriage, and some other pieces.

Let us begin with the *Satyre*. It is a sort of presentation of characters, without plot or incident. Peuple François commences.

This is what he says:

"Puisqu' après grant mal vient grant bien,
Ainsi qu'on dit en brief langage.
D'avoir soulcy n'est que bagage:
Qu'il soit ainsi, je l'entens bien.
* * * *
Quant est de moy, sur toute rien,
Désormais me veulx resjouir:
Et aussi, de va et de vien
Se je puis recouvrir le mien,
Pourray de mon plaisir jouyr."

Enter *Joyeuseté:*

"Peuple François se faict ouyr,
Je l'entends bien à sa parolle,
D'autant qu'il veult soucy fouyr
Et chagrin en terre enfouyr.
Il fault qu'il me baise et accolle;
Pour bien donner une bricolle,
Il en sçait bien la manière."

She is come, she says, to abolish all care and trouble. Quoth the People:

"Or ça, Joyeuseté jolye,
Que dict-on en court?
Joyeuseté. Qu'on y dit?
Du tout tristesse est abolye,
Et Joyeuseté recueillye,
Quand on m'y voit, sans contredit.
P. F. Qui sont ceulx qui ont le crédit?
J. Noblesse principalement.

P. F. Et puis après?
J. Par ung esdit,
Ceulx qui sont au faict et au dit,
Loyaulx en cueur entièrement."

* * * *

A Vigneron next comes in; he complains of the dearness of wheat, and the shameful conduct of bakers.

Jenin ma Fluste (*accoustré en Badin*, a kind of clown or jester) comforts him. He says that the bakers are as big robbers as the Scotch, who go about pillaging the villages. (Could this possibly allude to the Scottish Guard? One would be loth to think that Quentin Durward in his old age had betaken himself to these illegalities.)

Peuple François goes on grumbling:

"Boullengiers payéz de leurs gaiges
Seront, pour vray, quelque matin.
Jenin. Se je sçavois parler Latin
Ainsi que font ces Cordeliers,
J'aurois de blé les plains garniers,
Et si en ferois bon marchié."

The conversation gets dreary about this time. Then they sing a song:

"Par Joyeuseté,
En honnesteté,
Comme ja pensois,
Vivra en seurté,
Yver et esté,
Le peuple Françoys:
Des princes et roys
Verra les arroys[1]
Mieulx que bien venu
Et sans dessarroys
Et sans nulz desroys
Tousjours soustenu."

[1] arroys, the splendour.

Now comes Bontemps in high spirits:

"Vive le roy—vive le roy—
Et tous compaignons et moy!
Je suis Bontemps, qui d'Angleterre
Suis ici venu de grant erre
En ce pays de l'Auxerrois.
J'ai gouverné princes, ducs, roys,
Deçà, delà, en plusieurs lieux.
Et ay veu des cas merveilleux
Qui n'est jà besoing de les dire."

Then they all rejoice and embrace.

Peuple François plucks up a little courage, and leaves off grumbling at bakers and cordeliers.

"Puisqu'avons Bontemps, sans tarder
Il nous fault mener bonne vie;
Et dorénavant nous garder
De faire mal avoir envye.
Joyeuseté. Je suis en cueur presque ravye,
De veoir Bontemps devant mes yeulx.
Or, à tousjours je me convye
De n'estre jamais assouvie
De vous aymer de mieulx en mieulx.
Bontemps. Demeurer avec vous je veulx;
Mais un mot vous diray, non plus:
(Se vous n'estes bon—se m'eist Dieux)
Je m'en iray en aultres lieux,
Velà que je diz et conclus."

The Satyre ends. All the interest in this popular piece lies in the allusions; no doubt the hit at the bakers was well received, and the covert allusion to the use made by the cordeliers of their Latin would be caught by the gods. Dress, music, and action assisted the performance materially, and we all know, by recollection of Richardson's Theatre, how

very rude contrivances are able to touch the hearts of country-folk and children, and to carry their imaginations far away.

The next most remarkable piece of Roger's is entitled "Le Blason des Dames." It is a dialogue between Beau Parler and Recueil Gracieux.

B. P. (begins) Honneur aux dames!
R. G. C'est raison.
B. P. Il leur est deu.
R. G. Toute saison.
B. P. Dames doibt on aymer, pryser.
R. G. D'en dire tout bien y viser.
B. P. Je ne sache meilleur blazon.
R. G. Aux dames n'a comparaison.
B. P. Es champs, ès villes, en maison,
Chascun en doibt bien deviser.
R. G. Honneur aux dames, etc.
R. G. Dames doibt on aimer, pryser.
B. P. Qu'en dirons nous plus?
R. G. Advison.
B. P. Ceulx qui en mesdient?
R. G. Desprison.
B. P. Ceulx qui les blasment?
R. G. Deviser.
B. P. Ceulx qui les diffament?
R. G. Brizer.
B. P. Voiça bonne terminaison.
R. G. Honneur aux dames, etc."
etc., etc.

But they have by no means finished. They go to history, and quote the examples of Helen and Medea:

"La chose est clère et bien certayne,
Que les dames, au temps passé,
Ont en louange souveraine.
* * * *

B. P. Avant que venir au refrain,
Du propos auquel je me fonde.
Qui fut cause, à pur et à plain,
Que Saturne, sage et humain,
Fut le premier roy en ce monde?
R. G. Dame Vesca.
B. P. Parolle ronde."

The examples of Danae, of Judith, and of Agnes Sorel are quoted:

La Bible amplement nous desduyct
De Rebecca la diligence.
R. G. Des Cibilles la sapience
Plusieurs beaulx motz en sont dictz.
B. P. De Suzanne la continence,
Et d'Hester la benivolence,
Qu'en dict la Bible?
R. G. De beaulx dicts.

There are a great many more: Griselda, Lucretia, Sydoine, of the romance of *Ponthus et la belle Sydoine;* Vienne, from the romance of the *Destruction de Troie;* Galienne, from the romance of the *Conquest of the great king Charlemagne;* Rachel, Anne, and Thobye.

Recueil Gracieux says that the favour of ladies is not to be got by stupid and impertinent people. "Nor," returns his companion, "by menace." "Nor yet," says R. G., "by 'veullez ou non'." "Nor," says Beau Parler, "by presumption."

"Sans falace
Leur grace on a par bon renom."

Back to history again, and notably to Phaon and Sappho. Recueil Gracieux then makes the profound remark that if

you want to be loved, you must begin by being in love yourself. Finally (omitting a good deal) he says:

"Beau Parler, pour fouyr soulcy,
Nous concluons et là et cy:
D'ung franc voulloir, non vicieulx
Que les dames jusques aux cieulx
Avons exaulsées par bons termes.
B. P. Nos cueurs ne sont falacieux.
R. G. Ce traicté court, solacieux,
Nommerons le Blason des Dames."

The lamentations of a bourgeoise for her lover are headed by the Hebrew Alphabet, or some of the letters, Aleph, Gimel, etc., and each verse ends with a very odd refrain. Here is the first verse.

"Comme pourray, moy triste et désolée,
Porter l'ennuy que jour et nuyct j'endure
Pour vous, dont tant j'ay esté consollée
Et doulcement baisée et accollée?
Las! las! ce m'est une tristesse dure!
Chaleur me poingt, si faict aspre froidure,
Incessamment cueur et corps me fremye,
Pour l'absence de vous, ma chère amye.
Jherusalem—Jherusalem—
Vous aussy fille de Syon;
Plourez, gémissez mon mal 'an
Actainct de désolation."

An 'epitheton' on the four kings—Louis XI., Charles VIII., Louis XII., and Francis I., preserves their favourite oaths:

"Quant la 'Pasque Dieu' décéda,
Le 'Bon Jour Dieu' luy succéda

Au 'Bon Jour Dieu' deffunct et mort
Succéda le 'Dyable m'emport':
Luy décédé, nous voyons comme
Nous duist la 'Foy de Gentilhomme.'"

He also makes a prediction, singularly falsified:

"L'an mil cinq cens et trente neuf
L'on verra ung monde tout neuf;
Et Lutheriens confondus,
Et Payens et les Turcs fondus."

Henri Baude, who lived from 1430 to 1495, was a poet of the same school as Villon. Unluckily, Villon was remembered, and he was forgotten. Marot published Villon, and only stole from Baude. The theft was, however, of no great value. He was *élu* of Limousin. A selection of his writings has been recently published. They are obscure in their allusions, and though some of his critics find in them that 'sel gaulois et ce tour vif' which give life to Villon, I confess to being unable to appreciate their value. He spent his long life in Paris, doing the duties of his post by deputy. He fell into disgrace for a morality of his, in which the Royal power was represented by a fountain of water. Unluckily, the water came up mudded with grass, roots, sand, and earth. Allegories may mean something quite different from what the author intends. By the sand and grass he meant to signify the evil counsellors who always surround a king; but it appeared to the king as a reflection on the purity of his justice, and the author got three months' imprisonment.

Among Baude's verses are some curious mottoes for designs in tapestry. Here is one.

The design is—a lighted candle between a courtier and a labourer.

Quoth the courtier:

"Maint homme monte sans eschelle
Jusques au feu, pour ce qu'il luit,
Comme le papillon de nuit
Qui chiet, quant il s'est bruslé d'elle."

The candle says:

"Chacun vient sans que je l'appelle,
Et je brule ce qui me suit:
Pour tant qui est sage me fuit,
La façon de court est y telle."

And the rustic:

"On prent du riche la querelle,
On flatte celui qui a bruit,
On fait ainsi que se conduit
Le papillon à la chandelle."

Here is a riddle of the period. It is the cure for a drunken man: the numerals refer simply to the letters of the alphabet:

"Pour en guérir, prenez la quinte,
La vingtième après la première:
De guérir trouverez manière
Si vous en beuvez une pinte."

Here is a logogriphe, the answer to which is *envie*:

"Par la somme des douze mois,
Et le contraire de la mort,
Peut on vin qui a mis discort
Entre les Bretons et François."

He has the customary 'fling' at the Church, and at

society in general. It was before the bad days when men's tongues were tied.

"Nothing in the Church," he says, "but vices; and in the nobles pride, haughtiness, and pleasure; in the labourers 'faulse condicion;' in the merchants every kind of deception; very few rich men willing to study; in doctors no care about health; in champions, their harness 'en paniers'; usury among Lombards; the service of Bacchus and Venus everywhere.

"Brief tous estatz sont la où j'ay esté,
Ambicieux, confuz en vanité."

It is very odd to find this constant strain among the poets of this time. They all sing the same moralizing refrain. Charles of Orleans rebukes France for her sins; Villon, Octavien de Saint Gelais, even Collerye, Alain Chartier, all think it incumbent on them to become moral teachers, and to lament the vices of the age. There is, indeed, a sad lack of joyousness about them all. Coquillart's mirth is cynical, and the subject of his mirth disgraceful. Our jolly miller of the Vire alone has no regrets, no moralizing, no blubbering over the past, no invective against the present. And the next to him in jollity, the only other poet who really seems to have had that merriment of heart which is so great a constituent of happiness, is Clément Marot. It is needless to say that as the poets get worse, they grow more melancholy; Meschinot, without the least excuse for melancholy, takes us down to the tombs, just like Villon in his most abject moments. I think that these early poets considered it necessary to keep up their character by repressing their spirits. And

in spite of the many French humourists who have laughed and made us laugh—Rabelais, and La Fontaine, and the rest—it must be owned that French literature, as a whole, is of a far graver cast than our own. But there is very little fun in any early literature. Jokes, as Charles Lamb said, "came in with candles.

A very different person from Baude was his contemporary, Guillaume Alexis. Alexis has partly escaped from the oblivion which until lately fell upon Baude. He was imitated by La Fontaine, and is praised by St. Beuve. He was a monk who lived about the end of the fifteenth century, and who wrote a good many works of an edifying character. Of these, the best known and the most accessible poem is that called "Le Blason des faulces Amours." It is printed in a little volume with the "Quinze Joies de Mariage." It is a dialogue between a gentleman and a Monk. The gentleman is riding along singing. The Monk is riding with him, "paisible et coy." "Sing," says the gentleman,

"Car en chantant
En s'esbatant
Le temps se passe."

The Monk says he can sing a little, but does not altogether approve of the other's style of song:

"Vénus frivole
En son escole
Vons a faict grand praticien."

As for singing in praise of love, that is quite out of the question.

"Mais vos chansons et vos redites,
Ce sont vaines authoritez,
Que Salomon n'a pas escrites.
* * * *

Scavoir voudroye
S'en ceste voye
Pourrions nous
Tant trouver joye,
Qu'Amour n'envoye
Plus de courroux.
L'amer tousjours
Passe de doux.
Pourtant si chanter je vouloye
Le chant dirois meilleur de tous;
Faulces Amours, reculez vous
De moy que jamais ne vous voye.

Qui dict qu'amours
Ne sont que flours,
Il se deçoit;
Qui tous les jours
En voit les tours,
Bien l'apperçoit:
Voire et Dieu sçait
Quel mal conçoit
Qui d'Amour veut suivre les tours
Dont s'aucun dit qu'ainsi ne soit
Soustenir vueil qu'on y reçoit,
Pour un plaisir, mille douleurs.

Dueil, jalousie,
Puis frenaisie,
Puis sonspeçons,
Jours de folie,
Mélancolie,
Regrets, tensons,
Pleurs et chansons,
Sont les façons

D'amoureuse Chevallerie
Mieux vaudroit servir les Massons,
Que d'avoir au cœur tels glassons:
C'est une très mauvaise vie."

It will be seen that the poem is written in stanzas of twelve lines each, turning upon two rhymes only. Although the rhymes are not regulated by so strict a rule as in English verse, yet the ease of these verses, fettered by so hard a condition, is very remarkable.

He goes on to discourse of the wickedness and folly of love.

The gentleman answers him with the usual arguments. Boys will be boys: 'in the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love'—what would the monk have?

"Nous aymerons—
Nous chanterons—
En noz jouvences."

The Monk goes on moralizing:

"Le personnage
Doncque est trèssage,
Qui de bonne heure
Pour le passage
Son cas asseure,
De ce voyage.
Ceste demeure
N'est pas bien seure.
Ce n'est cy qu'un pelerinage
Et qui s'endort et ne labeure,
Ses negligences après pleure:
Et Dieu sçait quel piteux mesnage!"

The gentleman has got nothing to say but the same

thing over and over again,—and the Monk is down upon him with history. Who can resist history?

"Quand lá Toison
Comme lison
Fust conquestie,
Sire Jason,
Par son blason,
Ravit Medée:
O la journée,
Mal fortunée,
Que de douleur rendit foison!
Car la cruelle forcenée
Mist tous ses enfans à l'espée,
Quand elle vid sa mesprison.

Ceux que Venus
A detenus
En son domaine:
Quand sont venus
Vieux et chenus,
Tousjours les maine:
Mort est prochaine,
La peau les traisne:
De vieillesse sont tous chenus.
Quoiqu'ils n'aient force ou haleine,
Coustume envoie les ramene
Aux vices qu'ils ont maintenus."

As for women, they care about nothing in the world but dress and money:

"Soit ung amant
Frois et plaisant
Et diligent:
Soit plus luysant
Qu'ung diamant
Jolys et gent:
Soit plus pendant
Que Buridant,

Parlant aussi beau qu'un Rommant,
S'il n'a de l'or et de l'argent,
Et ne cognoist son entregent,
On lui dit adieu vous comment.
* * * *

Il faut ceintures,
Il faut brodures,
Et mirelifriques;
Il faut fourreures,
Il faut serrures,
Baquès et nicques,
Joyaux afficques;
Telz cornificques;
Rebras, chaperons et bordures:
Et Dieu sçait par quelles pratiques
Bien scavent mener leurs trafiques,
Et comment bien, trouvent leurs heurs."

The gentleman, who must have been easily open to conviction, is converted by the arguments of the Monk.

"Je croy que vices
Plaisirs, délices,
S'ils ont credit,
Font leurs coulices
Lasches et nices
Comme l'on dict.
Dont maint beau dict
Il a prédict,
Blasonnant d'Amours les malices,
Amour de femme nous perdit,
Et hors franchise nous rendit,
Subjects à cents mille malices."

He wrote, besides, the "Passetemps de tout homme et de toute femme." I have not seen this work, for which there has been, of late years, small demand. The title would appear to have been a sort of practical joke of the

author, in order to seduce light-minded youth into buying it, as holding forth promise of amusement. It is a translation of a book by Pope Innocent the Third, explaining to mankind how everything from youth to age should act as a deterrent from vice. Guillaume Alexis went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It was a time when pilgrimages were gone out of fashion, except in allegories. He went however, and, according to some, did not come back. While there, he wrote "Le Dialogue du Crucifix et du Pelerin."

In this work, the author interrogates Christ on the Cross, and receives answers on all sorts of moral topics.

There are other works attributed to him. "Le Miroir des Moines"—"Le Loyer des folles Amours"—"Le Passe-temps du Prieur de Bussy," etc. But the only poem undoubtedly his, that I have seen, is his Grand Blason, which I have described.

CHAPTER VII.

GUILLAUME COQUILLART.

A COMPLETE edition with a most careful *étude* on the man and his time has been published by M. Charles d' Héricault, from whose work I extract almost all the information I have been able to collect of this poet.

Coquillart was essentially the poet of the bourgeoisie. He represents their patriotism, their morality, their prejudices. He is gross in his ideas, being a bourgeois, and gross in his expression. His editor calls it the grossness of cynicism; it seems to me the grossness of nature.

The few facts of his life are these. He was born at Rheims in 1421; studied at Paris, and became a lawyer; returned to his native town, practised there; late in life took orders, and died canon of the Cathedral. His first work was written, or at least published, when he was fifty-seven years of age, a time of life which leaves not the smallest excuse for licentious writing. He died about the end of the fifteenth century—exact date unknown.

Out of these few details, M. d' Héricault has constructed a life of the most interesting nature. He takes us to the

country town, surrounded by walls, and guarded by stout-hearted burghers ever ready to turn out on a sudden alarm and protect their homes from wandering bands of robbers. He shews us the home life, where by the fire-side sat every evening the grandfather in the seat of honour, prosing over the good old days that France knew before Charles the Sixth; the mother careful of her little ones and busy with household duties, the maids with the spinning-wheel, the nurse with her songs and her old-wife tales, the children clustered round her knees, and the father returning late from a sitting of the councillors, pondering the chances and dangers of the town. He shews us Rheims on its great day when the new king rode in to be anointed with the sacred oil; and on its fête days when the town turned out, spite of evil times and national disgrace, to do its periodical pleasuring. Of what sort this popular pleasuring was, Coquillart furnishes us with abundant examples. Briefly, it was gross. The bourgeois mind, unable to comprehend the chivalrous honour and respect with which the noblesse loved, in words at least, to surround their ladies, could conceive of nothing more respectable in woman than good housewifery. For the things we call love, honour, virtue, nobleness, tenderness, grace, were to them words without meaning, or simply beneath contempt. In Coquillart's pages we see exactly what the popular belief on this subject actually was. A hard-handed and practical race of artisans, without culture, ignorant of any virtues but industry and courage, acting chiefly on the law of self-preservation, which prompted them to live together in walled cities, and to unite for purposes of defence, and having little patriotism but for their native

town, could hardly be expected to look upon the world with the eyes of a Charles of Orleans. The earliest lesson taught by external refinement is the beauty of respect for woman; and on the first downward step to rudeness and poverty brings the first step of woman's transformation to the household chattel. As yet, in the city of Rheims, the wife of the bourgeois might be a good mother and a careful housewife; she must be a drudge, and could expect the consideration generally given to a drudge. Doubtless, the women were themselves happy enough, knowing no higher lot. The bourgeois character is summed up by M. Héricault as gross, brutal, simple, full of life, and of a 'sensualisme gaillard,' an expression which so exactly fits the verses of Coquillart, and which is so utterly untranslateable, that I adopt it.

It is a curious thing that whenever a clever man degrades himself by printing what ought never to have been written, but which, being the work of a clever man, is generally readable and amusing, a sort of apology is set up for him, on the ground that he did it, not because he liked it and laughed at it, but with loathing and disgust, and out of his strong desire to paint the manners of the age. Thus Swift, who loved grossness for grossness' sake, has been defended; Hudibras, though Butler on the whole was a clean-minded man, could not possibly, we are told, have steered clear of unpleasant allusions; and even Rabelais has been pitied for the blindness and ignorance of the age which would not permit him to write his allegorical history without some occasional recreation in the fields of popular humour; and obliged him to veil his satire, else too withering, under the

broadest possible disguise. So Coquillart, we are gravely informed, was one of those men who cannot write otherwise than of things as they are, and who, being compelled to treat of things unholy, do yet so shrink from their task with such mighty reluctance to begin it, that it moves a Christian's pity. Further, the works of Guillaume, says the editor, are never wantonly licentious, only cynical.

All this is sheer nonsense; the real fact, as I read it, being that this old sinner, getting leisure when he entered the Church, and giving up practising law, began to beguile his hours with the pleasant memories of bygone sins, and found that they dropped easily and pleasantly into rhyme of a gaillard and joyous nature; that there was no cynicism at all in the case; that the poet was no better and no worse than his neighbours; that, without disgust of any kind, but with considerable delight, he began to set forth the manner of life of his countrymen, and relate their jokes, and this in a manner whose lightness and dexterity have rarely been surpassed.

The works of Coquillart still extant are as follows:

"Le Plaidoyer entre la simple et la rusée." This is a lawsuit about a man whom each claims as a lover. It is argued in the regular legal manner. It is followed by the "Enquête" on the same subject, when witnesses are heard, and the case decided.

The "Blason des dames et des armes," where the poet examines which ought to have the preference.

"Les Droictz nouveaux" is a collection of questions on love matters in the style to which allusion has already been made. This poem is written in a natural spirited way which must have made it very popular at the time.

Besides these, we have the "Monologue de la botte de foing"; the "Monologue du puys," and a few smaller pieces."

A few extracts will be sufficient to shew the style of Guillaume Coquillart.

"Lès dames par aultre moyen
Dient qu'ung prince aymant honneur
Tant soit noble ou grant terrien
Doit aux Dames mettre son cueur.
La raison? car toute doulceur
Y gist, toute benignité,
Et aux armes toute rigueur,
Tout desroy, toute austérité.
Dames font croistre honnestèté;
Dames font les cueurs resjouyr:
Dames font aymer loyaulté:
Dames font cruaulté fouyr:
Veiller, oreiller, taire, ouyr,
Estre prompt, prest, prudent, et saige;
Cela faict les Dames jouyr
Ung noble et vertueux couraige."

And, on the other side, hear what he says of the school of Love:

"Ne suivons plus d'Amour l'escole:
On n'y lit que des tromperies;
La science est folle parole;
Les grands jurements, menteries;
Les statuts, ce sont joncheries;
L'université, c'est malheur;
Les hedeaux lardons, mocqueries;
Faute de sens—c'est le recteur;
Trahison en est le docteur;
Fausseté en est le notaire;
Avarice, conservateur;

Suspection—c' est le greffier :
Dire tout—c' est le secretaire :
Desdain—c' est le premier huissier,
Qui garde les huis et fenestres ;
Refus est le grand chancellier ;
C' est celui qui passe les maistres."

On the quarrels of lovers :

"Tel a promis : telle se plainct :
Tel fringue à la mode nouvelle :
Tel est ruzé : telle se faint :
Tel ou telle en est le mieux saint.
Tel et telz brassent telz ouvraiges.
Tel est menassé : tel est craint :
Telz et telz sèment telz langaiges.
Telz sont farouches et sauvages.
Tel est riche : tel se marie" . . . and so on.

Here is an example of the style of question raised in the Droictz nouveaux :

"Un galant mignon, certain soir,
Se presentant à l' huis derrière,
Pour sa douce amie aller voir,
Ne trouva que la chambrière.
La chambrière, qui fut belle,
Bien usa de l' occasion ;
Elle prit ce bien là pour elle,
Et eut cette provision ;
Assavoir, si punition
Doit souffrir, comme larronesse,
Et quelle restitution
Elle doit faire à sa maistresse ?"

The last extract I give is particularly light and easy, and is perhaps the best illustration I could give of the style of Coquillart :

"Mais elle—pouac !—c'est une fée,
Ung bon petit corset bien prins,
Qui fait aussi bien la saffée (coquette) .
Que femme qui soit au pays :
Tousjours ung tas de petiz riz,
Ung tas de petites sournettes,
Tant de petits charivaryz,
Tant de petites façonnettes :
Petits gans, petites mainettes,
Petite bouche à barbeter[1];
Ba—ba—ba—font ses godinettes
Quant elles veulent cacqueter."

It is said that Coquillart died of grief at losing the best part of his fortune at the game of *morra*. Probably, when he was not engaged in the offices of the Church, or on the Droictz nouveaux, gambling offered a grateful means of recreation to this reverend moralist and venerable soul.

The elaborate criticism of Coquillart by M. d' Héricault is very curious. Words, says his editor, had not then the influence they have now, owing to the partial development of the imagination. What we, therefore, consider now as beyond measure demoralising, in those times was simply somewhat free. The bourgeoisie was essentially coarse, sensual, and materialistic. We must remember that the poems of Coquillart were received with enormous applause, and that his life, subsequent to their publication, was a series of honours. "Il etoit devenu l' oracle, le representant de l' esprit des Remois." His whole talent was in observation ; things strike him more than ideas ; characters present themselves to him, not with the thoughts which they have,

[1] barbeter. "parler gentillement—en remuant les lèvres avec vivacité, mais sans guère les ouvrir."

but dressed up with the colours they wear. Many of the infamies that the Church could not reach, many of the corruptions that a mother's tears could not wash away, and much of the ridicule which belonged to social sores of the time, were lashed, we are to believe, by this 'fouet brutal' which had to pass through the mud to find and reach them. He was essentially a realist; he makes each of his personages speak his own language, and he speaks to the people of his time the language which they like to hear, without asking himself if it is cynical or not.

Hear, on the other hand, what the Abbé Massien says of him. "I confess that having read his works with care, I perceive nothing in them which is deserving of remark; and it appears to me that what is good in them is choked by what is bad..."

And Goujet says: "This poet seems to have taken up his pen only to decry women.... but I do not know whether he has not dishonoured himself more than them by the licentiousness of his writing.... We perceive in his works a man who makes a merit of forgetting what was due to his character and his position. I am perfectly aware that he has always had, and has still, partisans and even admirers.... I have read his poems, and have found hardly anything in them worthy of remark."

The words of Dryden,

> "Old as he is, for ladies' love unfit,
> The power of beauty he remembers yet,
> Which once inflamed his soul, and still inspires his wit,"

contain, I believe, the real secret of the writings of this disreputable, clever old man.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMMORTALS.

In these early days of literature, a sort of Arcadian simplicity of criticism reigned over the slopes of Parnassus. There were as yet none of that pestilent carping brood who sit in judgment on the singers, and tell the world when they sing out of tune. All was honest delight. Unconsciously, out of the innocence of a pardonable vanity, the poets formed a grand mutual admiration society; turn by turn they applauded and performed. And whatever the performance, the applause was genuine; it was measured out in no niggardly spirit; there was no stint, no stopping to draw envious comparisons, no withholding of what was due. Every man was a Virgil, a Homer, an Ovid. It was fortunate for the world that he had lived. Future ages would read him for ever. He was the delight of the present, and would be the delight of the coming years. He was the prince of eloquence, the master of rhetoric, the teacher of virtue, the first of poets.

Hear how Marot sums up the glorious band:

"Adoucques Molinet
Aux vers fleuriz, le gran Chastelain,

Le bien disant en rythme et prose, Alain,
Les deux Grebans au bien resonnant style,[1]
Octavian à la veine gentile,
Le bon Crétin au vers équivoqué,
Ton Jehan Le Maire, entre eulx hault colloqué."

Here, too, is a part of his epitaph on Crétin—Guillaume Crétin, the most illustrious of all:

"Seigneurs passans, comment pourrez vous croire,
De ce tombeau la grand' pompe et la gloire?
Il n'est ne painct, ne polly, ne doré,
Et si ce dit haultement honoré,
Tant seulement pour estre couverture
D'ung corps humain cy mis en sépulture:
C'est de Crétin, Crétin qui tant sçavoit.

O dur tombeau, de ce que te encœuvres,
Contente toi, avoir n'en peuz les œuvres:
Chose éternelle en mort jamais en tombe,
Et qui ne meurt n'a que faire de tombe."

Meschinot to Chastelain:

"O George! des aultres le maistre
En la Rhetorique science....
Prince parfaict en éloquence,
Ne regardez aulcunement
En ce de mes sens l'indigence,
Mais donnez y amendement."

And Jean Bouchet on Meschinot:

"Si vous lisez des Princes les Lunettes
Vous n'y verrez que matières très nectes,
Pour acquerir les vertus Cardinals
Semblablement les trois Théologales."

[1] Arnoul and Simon Greban. Arnoul put into verse the Acts of the Apostles, but dying before he completed the task, Simon finished it. The work is thrown into some kind of dramatic form, but how, I do not know, as I have not seen it.

This galaxy of poets, the greater lights of whom we are about to notice, formed a sort of stellar republic, the head or president of which was the illustrious George Chastelain, 'prince parfaict en éloquence.' The band of immortal bards who twanged their lyres round this great man contained the imperishable names of Jean Molinet, Jean Meschinot, Guillaume Crétin, Jean Bouchet, André de la Vigne, and Jean le Maire.

"Jean le Maire belgeois
Qui eut l'esprit d'Homère le Gregeois."

They had their poetical names and devices, thus: one was "le banni de Liesse," another was "le traverseur des voies perilleuses," and they were gifted with the highest possible esteem for themselves, their friends, and their age. One reason of this self-conceit would be their popularity and the rapid diffusion of their writings by the new art of printing. The older poets were nearly forgotten, only their spirit remaining; a printed book was much easier to read than a manuscript, and immensely cheaper. For most of the older poets were not yet published; Charles of Orleans did not get published for three hundred years. There was plenty of room on the stage for everybody, and it was not till far on in the sixteenth century that this precious mine of rhyme shewed signs of exhaustion, and the miners began to find fault with each other. Meantime we are in the age of gold. Every hill is a Parnassus, every minstrel an Orpheus, every listener weeps tears of ecstacy.

But the years have rolled over, and other bards have piped on other hills, and to newer tunes. These, the never-

dying, are clean forgotten and past out of mind, only to be found in some great library, or some musty old collections of poetry. Truth compels us to say that they deserved their fate, and worse than their fate. Oblivion was the most merciful punishment that could befal them; to be forgotten better than to be remembered. Their compositions are tedious, their taste execrable. What is to be thought of the following? Jean Molinet is the offender. He is singing the praises of Saint Anne. It must be premised that the word *anne* was in some parts used instead of *aune*, an ell.

"Ton nom est Anne, et en Latin Anna:
Dieu tout puissant qui justement t'anna,
Veult qu'à l'anne tu soies comparée:
Quatre quartiers une très juste anne a,
Quatre lettres en ton nom amena,
Par quoy tu as juste et bien mesurée:
Quatre vertus sont dont tu es parée."

Another example of the same style may be taken from the same poet:

"Molinest n'est sans bruyt, ne sans nom non,
Il a son son, et comme tu vois, voix:
Son doulx plaid plaist mieulx que ne faict ton ton,
Ton vif art ard plus cler que charbon bon.
Tes trenchants chants perchent ses parois roids,
D'entregent gent ont nobles François choix,
Je ne doibs doigts doubter en son laict laid,
Car soubvent vent vient des Molinet net."

Meschinot, too, composed an oraison—I sincerely wish I could give it, but I have not been able to find it anywhere—of eight lines. This could be read, either as eight or as sixteen verses, backwards or forwards, in no less than

thirty-two different ways, and all—it is said, though it is difficult to believe—with sense. Could one discover the Principle or Law of Formation of this kind of verse, it might prove useful to some of our modern poets.

George Chastellain begins a poem in this style: "Blow, Triton, on thy silver trumpet; Muse, while playing on thy sweet pipe, give praise and heavenly glory to Phœbus the god with the red beard; when from the orchard where grows many a nut, and where lilies spring up by millions, etc."

They were all allegorical, to a man. Meschinot—who was Maitre d' Hôtel to five Dukes of Brittany in succession—goes to sleep and has a dream. He does not forget to give us the prayers he said before he lay down. In his dream, Reason appeared to him and presented him with a book, called Conscience, and a pair of spectacles. The two glasses of his spectacles were named respectively Prudence and Justice; the ivory in which they were set was Force, and the bar which joined them was Temperance. Through these spectacles, called Les Lunettes des Princes, he had to read the book and transcribe what he found for the benefit of the world. This he did most faithfully, and the world was so grateful that it bought twenty-two editions of his work in fifteen years. Since that time there has been no great demand for Maitre Meschinot.

André de la Vigne, too, had a dream. In his vision he found himself with Dame Christianity, who was in a very low way, crying and lamenting that no one cared for her, that the Turks and Jews insulted her, and that her own subjects abandoned her. Dame Nature hearing these plaints comes to comfort her with the assurance that better

times are in store. It appears that the Sybil has lately made a prophecy, to the effect that a prince is shortly to be born who is to arm for her defence. This prince, if we may anticipate to satisfy the reader's curiosity, is none other than Charles the Eighth of France. Noblesse further promises to animate the hearts of all who depend on her, and to make them followers on the right side. The next step is for all to go together to the garden called the Vineyard of Honour, where Royal Majesty is holding her court. She assembles a council and they discuss the projects of Dame Christianity. It is supposed that by this time the prince is born and grown up. After some opposition from an *inconnu*, which is overruled by Bon Conseil, a resolution is passed in favour of the war, and the poet leaving the allegory plunges into the details of the Conquest of Naples. The expedition is described with all the precision of a Journal.

Under the title of the "Chevalier délibéré" Olivier de la Marche, a Burgundian of some position, and in great favour with both Duke Philip and Duke Charles, wrote an account in allegory of the life and death of Duke Charles. As a knight-errant he meets a Hermit, called *Entendement*, who shews him the relics of a certain *Accident*. These relics are the broken arms of valiant men who have made a name in the world. He fights against *Accident*, but is compelled to give way, and goes to the Palace of Love. Here *Desire* urges him to enter, but *Recollection* keeps him back. Thence to the manor of *Bonne Aventure*, where lives *Fraîche Mémoire*; she shews him the burial-places of the ancient dead, and he reads their epitaphs. Some have been killed by

means of *Débile, i.e.* weak old age, and some by *Accident.* Then he finds himself at the palace of *Atropos*, where *Accident* and *Débile* are at work. Over the gates is written in golden letters—

"Cy fine le chemin mondain,
Ce fine la sente[1] de vie.
Cy se fiert[2] le pas inhumain,
Dont Atropos juge soudain
A la pouvoir et seigneurie.
Nul n'y entre qu'il ne desvie[3]
Deux champions, et si très forts
Qu'ils sont tous les ancestres morts."

A fight ensues between *Débile* and Duke Philip of Burgundy, in which the former gets the best of it.

The *Parement des Dames* is another work of this author's. Goujet describes it; it must be most insufferably dull. De La Marche was a friend of Chastelain's. He died in 1501.

Another tremendous allegorist is Martin Le Franc. It is difficult to say why so much that has been written on the subject of *les dames* has proceeded from priestly pens. But the fact is so. They have made the theme their own. Ecclesiastical lances have been ranged on both sides. Priests and monks have been the defenders and the assailants of woman's honour. I suppose that a contemplative spirit, fostered by solitude, fasting, and much pondering on lofty themes, enabled them to approach this subject, at once attractive and difficult: or perhaps the nature of their duties as confessors and directors gave them opportunities for probing the feminine heart not open

[1] sente = sentier, path. [2] se fiert = s'élance
[3] desvie, desvoyer (de via), turns aside, defeats.

to laymen. It is gratifying to find that the defence of *les dames* has been ably conducted by these tonsured and saintly recluses. Martin Le Franc was secretary to Felix the Fifth, and afterwards to Nicolas the Fifth. In the intervals of his official labours he penned the work entitled *Le Champion des Dames, livre plaisant, copieux et abondant en sentences, contenant la Défense des Dames contre Malebouche et ses consorts, et victoires d' icelles.* This book has two objects, first to counteract the pernicious doctrines in the Roman de la Rose, and second to compliment the ladies of the House of Savoy.

He begins abruptly:

"À l'assault, Dames, à l'assault,
À l'assault dessus la muraille;
Cy près est venu en sursault
Malebouche en grosse bataille:
À l'assault, Dames, chascune aille
À sa deffence, et tant s'efforce
Que l'envieuse villenaille
Ne nous ait d'emblée ou de force."

In fact, Malebouche and his army are already advancing to assail the Castle of Love, which is fully described. Franc Vouloir, irritated at the insolence of Malebouche, sallies forth to undertake the defence of the ladies. He challenges Malebouche, not to a duel with arms, but with arguments. The latter accepts, sends Brief Conseil l'Estourdi for his advocate, and the battle begins. Brief Conseil exposes the tyranny of love and the many evils caused by him. Franc Vouloir replies, and the argument goes on for a long time without issue. Both parties agree in accepting Truth as their Judge. As usual, when wanted,

she is out of sight, but is ultimately discovered in a dark corner "without any candle," and is installed as arbitrator. Then to it again. Franc Vouloir shews the dreadful effects of hatred as compared with Love, and illustrates his argument by a reference to the distracted state of France. Malebouche, feeling that he is getting the worst of it, puts on Vilain Penser, a terrible fellow. He takes history and begins from the begining, even from Eve herself:

"Telle la mere fut et telles
Les filles furent et seront,
De l'homme ennemies mortelles,
Et jamais ne s'amenderont."

This formidable antagonist attacks their charms, their beauty, and their attractions, as being only so many threads with which to catch and lead captive men. He gives a long list of names from history of women who have been famous for their vices or their crimes. He not only curses the bad, but will not allow that there are any good: he attacks the institution of matrimony, and will not believe that any woman exists who sincerely mourns her departed husband.

Franc Vouloir answers by saying that Eve was not so bad as Adam; that there have been as many good women as bad; that we owe our existence to their sufferings; that gentleness, modesty, and tenderness are theirs; that a man cannot do better than unite himself in marriage to a good woman, and be guided by her counsels; that when a marriage turns out badly, it is generally the fault of the man; and that virtuous love is the best thing possible for young men. Then he tells the following story:

"Cy vous conterai d'ung novice
Qui oncques veu femme n'avoit;
Innocent estoit et sans vice,
Et rien du monde ne scavoit,
Tant que celluy qui l'ensuivoit
Luy fist accroire par les voies,
Des belles Dames qu'il véoit,
Que c'estoient tous oysons et oyes.

On ne peut nature tromper:
En après tant luy en souvint
Qu'il ne peût diner ne soupper,
Tant amoureux il en devint:
Et quant des Moines plus de vingtz
Luy demanderent qu'il musoit,
Il respondit comme il convint,
Que veoir les oyes lui plaisoit."

This story is found in Boccacio; it is referred to by Chaucer in his Court of Love.

"As soon as Nature maketh you so safe,
That ye may know a woman from a swan."

Franc Vouloir goes on to enumerate his good women, among whom he places the Maid of Orleans. To this name exception is taken by Malebouche, who endeavours to prove that Joan of Arc was an adventuress.

"L'on m'a dit pour chose certaine,
Que comme ung page elle serrit
En sa jeunesse ung Capitaine
Oú l'art de porter harnois vit:
Et quant jeunesse la revit,
Et voulut son sexe monstrer,
Conseil eut qu'elle se chévit
À harnois et lance pourter.

Puis force advisant la manière
Qu' à Orleans elle viendroit,

Et comme simplette Bergière
Demanderoit et respondroit,
Et comment enseignes rendroit
Au Roy et à son Parlement,
Par lesquelles on entendroit
Qu'elle venist divinement."

This passage is curious, as shewing that even in these times there were men who could not understand the miracle of Joan's mission, save on the ground of imposture.

Then Franc Vouloir, treating all this as calumny, turns the tables by giving a list of bad men, a thing by no means difficult. Malebouche throws Pope Joan at his head, bursting out into a strain of pious indignation; and Franc Vouloir, instead of shewing that the whole story is a fable, which one would think he might easily have done, being at the time Secretary to the Pope, argues that, in respect to laws and institutions, she did more than many other Popes.

Truth interposes at last and gives the victory to Franc Vouloir, whom she crowns with laurel:

"Lors au Champion s'en vient elle,
Dont tout le monde est esperdu:
Disant, pour ce que la querelle
Des Dames as bien deffendu,
Et vers cil tout debvoir rendu
Qui est de tous biens tresorier,
Franc Champion tu n'as perdu
Le Chappelot verd de lorier."

The unfortunate Malebouche dies of grief. We are not told what becomes of Vilain Penser. Perhaps he dies too.

Martin Le Franc thus finishes:

"Et vous Dames et Damoyselles,
Qui estes naturellement
De graces pleines, ausquelles
Voüé me suys entièrement,
Si je n'ay assez haultement
Conté et loüé vostre affaire,
Pardonnez moi courtoisement,
Car j'ay fait ce que j'ay sçeu faire."

This piece had a great success at the time, but when a taste for a more natural style grew up, was gradually forgotten. He wrote another piece, called *L'estrif de Fortune*, in the same prolix style. He died about 1460. The last edition of his works was published in 1530.

Christine de Pisan left one son, at least, who followed in her steps. This was Jean de Castel, a Benedictine monk. He wrote the *Mirouer des Pêcheurs et Pêcheresses*. The mirror is death, in which if men look constantly they are prevented from sinning. The poem is divided into three parts, called *Le Spécule des Pêcheurs; l'Exhortation des Mondains, tant gens d'église, comme séculiers:* and *L'Exemple des Dames et Damoyselles et de tout le sexe feminin.* It has never been printed so far as I know.

Pierre Michault, a countryman of Chastelain, "the adventurous George," was secretary to Charles, Duke of Burgundy when he was Count of Charolois.

Michault has left a wonderful allegory. He meets Virtue in a forest. She has fled from mankind, who no longer merit her presence; but in this wood she has come upon a school—a subterraneous school, where they actually teach "de pernicieuses maximes:" she wanted to enter, but the porter would not let her. Pierre and she go together.

It is the school of Vice. Disdain is the porter; he will hardly condescend to look at them as they go in. There is a Rector and twelve assistant Masters and Mistresses. Their names are Detraction, Vain Glory, Deception, Ambition, Rapine, Corruption, Adulation, and others whose names are known to us by their subsequent connection with Vanity Fair.

Virtue and Michault go from chair to chair, taking notes of the teaching. He publishes these with brief reflections of his own.

Virtue, not being able to stand these dreadful lessons very long, runs away, and is followed by Pierre. They go to the old school of Virtue. Alas! the very road is overgrown, the school is half in ruins, the Professors' chairs are covered with dust, and the lessons written on the walls are half defaced.

He ends with verses in the most approved style of Crétin and Molinet:

"Le monde fait de tout services vice.
D'amer amer, et de rebelle belle
Pour deçepvoir: fait de malice lice
Et de droit tout soubs sa police lice, etc."

A better idea prompted the writing of the *Danse des Aveugles*. Here men are all represented as following their blind guides, Love, Fortune, and Death. The two first draw after them most of mankind; the third, all.

Love says:

"Je fais Rondeaux et Ballades parfaire;
Je fais courir et faire mains grans faulx:

Je fais fonder edifices moult haults:
Je fais voler trompettes et chevaulx;
Je fais donner bagues, robes et dons,
Dont les donnans en souvent faulx guerdons."

Another, and perhaps the most illustrious, of this band, was Guillaume Crétin.

He also was a chronicler, being appointed historiographer to Francis the First. His history is in verse and begins with the siege of Troy, then the commencement of a good many histories. His poems, consisting of the usual rondeaux, etc., were published by his friend François Charbonnier in 1527, after his death. Like Molinet, he was enormously praised. His rhyming chronicle is a second Iliad; he is a second Homer; his verses are models of taste, elegance, and poetic ease. Above all, his rhymes are even more ingeniously doubled, trebled, and twisted than those of Molinet. Here is a specimen:

"Par ces vins verds Atropos a trop os
Des corps humains ruez envers en vers,
Dont un quidam, aspre aux pots, à propos
A fort blasmé ses tours pervers par vers. . . ."

Rabelais ridicules Crétin in his Pantagruel. Panurge, in that dreadful doubt of his on the subject of marriage, was advised by Pantagruel to go and consult the dying poet Raminagrobis. "We have," says Pantagruel, "near to the town of Villanmere, a man that is both old and a poet, to wit, Raminagrobis, who to his second wife espoused my lady Broadsow, by whom he begot the fair Basoche. It hath been told to me that he is dying, and so near unto his latter end, that he is almost upon the very last moment,

point, and article thereof. Repair thither as fast as you can, and be ready to give an attentive ear to what he shall chant unto you. It may be that you shall obtain from him what you desire, and that Apollo will be pleased by his means to clear your scruples." Whereupon Panurge, accompanied by Epistemon and Friar John, goes to visit the old poet, whom they find, indeed, almost *in articulo mortis*. They make oblation of a fair white cock, in imitation of Socrates, and propose to him their difficulty. Whereupon, Raminagrobis, 'the honest old man,' calls for pen, ink, and paper, and gives them the following answer:

"Prenez la, ne la prenez pas.
Si vous la prenez, c'est bien faict.
Si ne la prenez, en effect,
Ce sera ouvré par compas.
Galloppez, mais allez le pas:
Recullez, entrez y de faict:
Prenez la, ne.

Jeusnez, prenez double repas:
Deffaictes ce qu' estait refaict.
Refaictes ce qu'estoit deffaict.
Soubhaitez luy vie et trespas.
Prenez la, ne."

He then begs them to go and leave him in peace; and warns them against monks, whom he calls by such a string of evil names that the pious Panurge is of opinion that he is 'going infallibly to thirty thousand panniers-full of devils.' However, he gets small comfort by the response of the dying poet, which is exactly the answer made by Guillaume Crétin to Christopher de Refuge, who consulted him on his intended marriage.

The great advantage that accrued to France from this laborious mass of versifiers was the increased flexibility they gave to the language. Their power over words was prodigious. It fairly ran away with them, and they seem to have written, not so much because they had something to say, for they generally had very little, but because they must needs be saying something. Language was their plaything. By twisting and turning it about, it shewed, like a kaleidoscope, endless varieties of shape and colour. They played with the tools that Marot was destined to use, and by fashioning their ingenious tasteless toys, they shewed at least what might be done by the hands of a skilful workman.

The best of them was Jean Le Maire. He wrote an enormous quantity both in verse and prose. He first perceived the weakening effect of employing the *é* mute at the end of the first hemistich; and Clément Marot owed more to him than to all his contemporaries together. His most important work, which appeared in 1503, the poet then being thirty years of age, is called the Temple of Honour and Virtue; it is a mixture of prose and verse, and is dedicated to Anne of France, daughter of Louis XI. Most of his other pieces are vers d' occasion; on the death of some royal personage, the departure of some other. It is said that he died in a hospital, having lost his reason, in 1524.

Hear the three tales of Love and Atropos.

> "Oyez, mortels, un bien nouveau propos
> De Cupido, le dieu des amourettes,
> Et de la Mort qu'on appelle Atropos."

Love, flying 'par voies indiscretes,' meets Atropos also

flying along; accidentally jostles her, and finding her sides too hard to run against, complains—

"O vieille aveugle et folle!
Voir ne te puis, car j'ai les yeux bandez,
Dont en heurtant contre toi je m'affolle."

"Beau sire dieu," replies Death in low and deep voice, "très mal vous l'entendez. I have business of my own, and you retard me."

"Well," Cupid returns, "one is not obliged to be always doing mischief: if you have no objection, belle dame, let us stop and drink."

Saying this, they arrive at a tavern. Here La Mort drinks like a cistern, boasting all the time of her deeds, while Cupid "redressait sa bannière", telling how many people he sends mad,

"Et leur fait perdre et maintien et manière."

Disputing thus, they drink "à tous coups"; Atropos pledges, and Cupid at last gets drunk. Finally, the host getting tired of his noisy guests, turns them out of doors, and they depart, one at one side, and one at the other. But see the effects of intemperance. Love has taken Death's bow and arrows; Death, Love's:

"Voulez vous plus beaux tours?
Sans y viser et sans autre record,
S'en vont ailleurs, tirant fleches sans nombre.
Mort fait lumière et Cupido fait ombre.
A chacun coup que Cupido descoche,
Il attaignoit de mortelle sagette
Ou homme ou femme à qui la Mort approche:
Et à tous coups que fausse Atropos jette
Elle faisoit homme ou femme amoureux.
Maint beau jeune homme alaigre ou vigoureux

Y vis je cheoir atteint de mortel dard,
Et maint vieillard, d'amour tout langoureux."

Thus far the first tale. The second resumes the story.

After doing an incomparable amount of mischief, the luckless Love, still drunk, but very tired, makes the best of his way home to the lap of his mother. She is lying on a bed of feathers, and around her are the Nymphs and Graces, 'bien refaites et grasses,' and when this "fol dieu qu'on maudit" came staggering back, all were sound asleep except Volupté, the niece of Venus. She was amusing herself by playing with the little naked children, making a banquet for them, "plein de joie et d'amoureux caquet," and welcomed her intoxicated cousin by three bumpers of wine, to make him sober again, I suppose; then she took a harp and played and sang for him, till he went asleep in Venus's lap, snoring and sighing. He had dropped his bow and arrows on a cushion near the bed, whither Volupté most unfortunately went to recline. She pricks herself with the point of an arrow, and falls back with a piercing shriek which wakes everybody. She is found senseless, cold, and stiff. Venus in great alarm implores the help of Jupiter; and Volupté is brought to life again by the application of a balm by the Nymph Pasithé. Venus kisses her:

"Las! qui t'avoit, ô ma niece, ma mie,
Ainsy navrée, et en mort endormie?
Que je le sache, enfin de m'en venger."

Volupté shews the fatal bow, which Venus recognises at once as the bow and quiver of Death. She is furious.

"'Gardez, pour Dieu,'" dit elle, "d'y toucher:
Filles, gardez. Ah! le notable archer
Qui a changé son très bel arc d'yvoire
A cestui-cy d'Atropos pasle et noire!
Qu'il soit porté hors de nostre chastel,
Avec son arc et son carquois mortel.
Mais gardez bien de toucher à main nue,
Ni arc, ni fleche: O quel disconvenue!
Je sçay de vray qu'il en a fait du mal.'"

Mischief, indeed, he has done. While they were throwing the bow and arrows out of the window of the castle into the foss, a horrible noise saluted their ears. It was the cry of a vast tribe of people imploring pity from Death, who was driving them and beating them, "vers le chastel où de dames a tant". When Venus saw them them through the window, she cried out, "À la barrière!"

"Portiers, fermez, levez le pont-levis.
"Oncques le jour tel tumulte ne vis."

"These are old men, coughing and bent, whom Death is driving in great heaps towards this castle of love and pleasure, against the law of natural usance; and every one carries on his back the dead body of a youth."

About this time, too, Love catches it, as he well deserves:

"'Ah! mauvais fils," dit elle, 'es tu délivre
De ton fort vin? seras tu toujours yvre?
Où est ton arc si noble et triomphant?
Qu'en as tu fait? dis, malheureux enfant,
Qui pour tuer tous ceux de nostre hostel
As apporté cy-dedans l'arc mortel."

To whom Love:

"Ha! madam,
Certainement je suis digne de blasme:

J'en ai regret, et le cœur m'en remord
Tant d'avoir bu avec l'horrible Mort,
Comme d'avoir par erreur pris l'arc sien,
Car bien j'entends qu'elle a ores le mien:
Mais je suis seur bientost le recouvrer,
Et désormais plus sagement ouvrer."

He mounts a tower and addresses Atropos, calling upon her to restore his property, and threatens to kill her with her own arrows if she refuses.

"Ah! ivrognet," respond la Mort immonde,
Je crains autant tes menaces folettes.
Comme je fais roses et violettes:
Finir ne puis, ne jamais ne mourray:
Ains après toy éternelle seray.
Mais puisqu' ainsi t'es mis en ce danger
Que de mon arc à cestuy-cy changer,
Je veuil aussy que nous changions de noms,
Et que le nom de l'un l'autre prenions:
Car désormais en tous cris et clamours
Tu seras dit la Mort, et moy Amours."

Explicit the second part. In the third, Venus in despair appeals to Jupiter, who promises to help her, and with this object summons by his herald Mercury both parties to send 'gens de bon entendement' for the pleading of the cause.

Atropos sends 'la cruelle Mégère,' Venus sends Volupté, and Mercury holds the court. Volupté makes demand of restitution on the ground that Cupid is a child of tender years, and was, moreover, drunk when he effected the exchange. Mégère refuses, saying that the exchange was free and voluntary, that drunkenness can never be pleaded in excuse, and that they are making a great fuss about nothing, because everybody has seen Cupid causing the martyrdom of young people with his own bow.

"Je n'en dis plus et finis pour cela:
Pourtant chacun se tienne à ce qu'il a."

Volupté is about to reply, which would have been the beginning of a long series of quarrels, when Mercury stops them and pronounces his award, "par Jupiter, roy des dieux et des hommes." He gives to Volupté a new bow for Cupid, with strict injunctions not to do it again. And to Mégère he hands a new bow, with which Atropos can exercise her old office. "But," he says, "if she wants to use the bow of Cupid, and draw the old into Love, let every one know that—

"A tous ceux là qui en seront atteints
Telle rigueur leur sera impartie
Qu'ils aimeront, mais sera sans partie:
Tous ces vieillards toussans, crachans, chenus,
Ne seront point aux dames bien venus,
Et s'ils le sont, ce sera pour l'addresse,
Non point l'amour, mais plutost la richesse."

And this is the reason why young men die, and old men fall in love.

"The legend of Master Pierre Faifeu, or the Gests and Joyous Sayings of Master Pierre Faifeu, scholar of Angers," is a collection of stories, tricks, and shifts. It appeared early in the sixteenth century, and was the work of one Charles de Bordigné, of whom all we know is that he was a priest, that he "flourished" about 1530, and that he was the panegyrist of Crétin, whom he admired hugely. He was a great admirer, too, of his own work, unless the following advice to give up reading Ovid, Virgil, and the rest, and to study Faifeu, is not part of the fun of the book.

"De Pathelin n'oyez plus les cantiques,
De Jehan le Meun la grant jolyveté,
Ni de Villon les subtilles traficques,
Car pour tout vrai ils n'ont que nacquetté.[1]
Robert le Diable a la teste abolye,
Bacchus s'endort et ronfle sur la lyę,
Laissez estre caillette le folastre,
Les quatre filz Aymon vestuz de bleu,
Gargantua qui a cheveulx de plastre,
Voyez les faits Maistre Pierre Faifeu.

* * * *

Le Prince Ovide a dêchiffré Baratre
Du Roy Pluton tout l'enorme Theâtre,
Ce n'est rien dit, mettez tout dans le feu,
Mesme Virgile en plaignant sa marastre,[2]
Voyez les faits Maistre Pierre Faifeu."

I think it was in one of Marryat's novels that I first read the story of the Flea Killing Powder. It may be remembered that the mountebank—either Japhet or Timothy—offers for sixpence a packet, an infallible powder, warranted to confound and instantly kill any flea in the world; having sold his packets, he proceeds to explain the method of use. It is this: "You catch your flea," he says, "and then, holding him firmly by the fore-finger and the thumb, you tickle him in the ribs till he laughs. As soon as the action of laughter commences, the mouth involuntarily opens. You throw a pinch of the powder in, and your flea dies."

One meets so many of these wellknown stories in older forms, that one wonders where the narrators of the present day get them from. This one is found in M. de Bordigné almost in the same words. Faifeu makes a lot of little

[1] naqueter, to serve slavishly. [2] marastre = belle mère.

packets of saw-dust, which he proclaims as his "poudre aux puces." Everyone runs to buy it.

"——lors en fist bonne vente:
Car pour tout vray publiquement se vante
Que les puces toutes fera mourir.
Là eut argent, pour son fait secourir,
Tant et si bien qu'il fut assez content.
L'un des présens s'advisa tout content,
Que bien sont fous de-là s'estre amusés,
Sans qu'il leur dist la manière d'user
De la poudre que il leur a vendue,
A Faifeu va sans faire autre attendue,
Luy demander la manière et la sorte
Qu'il faut user de la poudre qu'il porte.
Il luy respond, sans faire long caquet,
Que mettre faut les puces en paquet,
Puis les prendre chacune seule à seule
Et leur pousser la poudre dans la gueule:
Toutes mourront sans faire long séjour.
Lors chacun rit d'avoir en celuy jour
Tel passetems et si bonne responce:
Mais tout soudain le gaillard fist esponce
Avec l'argent qu'eut par son plaisant jeu:
Il s'en alla, et sans leur dire adieu."

I suppose that few readers could be found now for Simon Bougouinc. This excellent man was valet-de-chambre to Louis XII., and in that most moral and proper court wrote an allegorical poem, entitled, "L'espinette du jeune Prince conquérant le Royaume de bonne renommée." It is written for all princes, not for any one in particular, and is intended as a sort of Moral Handbook. The prince is confided to six chevaliers, namely, Cueur Attrempé, Sens Pourveu, Conseil Mésuré, and three others. Unfortunately, he meets

Jeunesse and Folie, who disgust him with his friends, and with whom he goes off. There is no need to go through the history of this allegory. The prince has all sorts of adventures, gets an immense amount of sermonizing, and ends well, which is more than one could expect after Simon's five books.

It is difficult to approach Jean Bouchet without fear and trembling. There was never such a voluminous writer on the face of the earth. One would think that if he had written continuously from five years of age to seventy-five, at which age he died, he would hardly have been able to achieve all his productions. He was a lawyer, too, by profession, and doubtless spent some of his time in law work. He wrote histories, chronicles, biographies, letters, allegories, ballads, rondeaux, books of advice and instruction, and epitaphs. And he never rises above a tame mediocrity of style. He belongs to the period of Clément Marot, rather than to that of the poets who precede him. He was mixed up in the quarrel between Clément and Sagon, the latter addressing him a letter in which he complains of Marot. Bouchet, however, would take no active part in it, saying:

"Mais, las! Marot pour cuider hault voller,
Et les secretz d'evangile accoller,
Et repugner aux préceptes d'Eglise,
S'est par sa faulte en très grant peine prise:
Il me desplaist le veoir infortuné,
Parce qu'il est un vray Poëte né."

This Bouchet certainly was not; but he was a man of sound sense, and his verse is infinitely above that of Crétin and the rest. Read, for instance, this Rondeau:

"Quand il lui plaist, Fortune fait avoir
Gloire et honneur, richesses et avoir,
Et quelques uns met au haut de sa roue,
Lesquels soudain fait descendre en la boue,
Tant qu'ils en sont pitoyables a voir.
De patience il se convient pourvoir,
Quand résister on veut à son pouvoir;
Car elle rit, puis soudain fait la mine,
Quand il lui plaist.

Elle ne peut les humains décevoir,
Qui ont le sens rassis et bon sçavoir:
Car aucun d'eux de ses biens ne se loue,
Bien avertis que la dame s'en joue
En les baillants, pour après les ravoir
Quant il lui plaist."

When shall the good time come again?

"Quand prestres sans iniquité,
En l'eglise, Dieu serviront:
Quand en spiritualité,
Simonie plus ne feront:
Quand bénéfices ils n'auront,
Fors comme il leur appartiendra;
Quand plus ne se déguiseront,
Alors le bon temps reviendra.

Quand ceux qui ont autorité,
Leurs sujets plus ne pilleront;
Quand nobles sans crédulité,
Et sans guerres en paix vivront;
Quand les marchands ne tromperont,
Et que le juste on soutiendra:
Quand larrons au gibet iront,
Alors le bon temps reviendra."

Men of low origin at all times have consoled themselves with the reflection that true nobility does not depend on

the accident of birth. In those days the pressure of ignoble birth must have been very heavy, and the privilege of nobility almost too much for the patience of the middle classes. Let us hope that these words of Bouchet conveyed comfort to some.

"Iphicrates, d'un couturier enfant,
Qui par vertus fut un roi triomphant,
Réponse fit au seigneur Hermodie
Qui lui disoit, en parole étourdie,
Qu'ignoble étoit: "Je vois," dit il," en toi
Finir noblesse et commencer en moi."
Dire voulant—"noblesse perds par vice,
Et je l'acquiers par droiteur et justice."

Il vaudroit mieux estre fils Thersités,
Lasche et couard, et être un Achillés,
Que d'estre fils d'Achillés et de suivre
Ce Thersités, et folles mœurs poursuivre."

We are nearly at the end of our list of poetasters. Gringore, whose device was, "Tout par raison, raison partout, partout raison," wrote allegories, of which we have had enough, and, dramatic pieces which do not concern us in this place.

Jean Regnier, a Burgundian, being taken prisoner by the French, employed the time of his captivity in writing a great quantity of lais, ballads, and songs. We may pass him over.[1]

Of Guillaume Alexis, who deserves special notice, we have spoken in another place.

Michel d'Amboise can hardly be called a predecessor

[1] He must not be confounded with his much greater namesake, Mathurin Regnier, who was not born till 1573.

of Marot. He was born in 1509, and died in 1547; was an illegitimate son of Charles d'Amboise, admiral of France; called himself *L'esclave Fortuné;* and wrote erotic verse.

Of Blaise d'Auriol, who was a great Doctor in Law, it is only necessary to say that he stole wholesale from Charles of Orleans; and that, astrologers having predicted a second Deluge in 1524, he took steps to ensure his own safety by building a boat for himself in his courtyard.

Massien enumerates others whom he dismisses with a line or two. They are Guillaume Vincent, Guillaume Boivin, Pierre Danthon, Robert Gaguin, Mesdames Dantragues, and Monnier, Robertet, and Margaret of Austria.

It must not be supposed that this list is exhaustive. On the contrary, poetry was the fashion, and everybody with the least pretensions to wit and education made verses. A century later it was much the same in England; certainly more versifiers wrote for us between the years 1600 and 1700 than either before or since, whose works, now forgotten, rest on the shelves of great libraries, only disturbed by the curious. These rhymers of the day form the great imitative throng. When taste is good, mediocrity lifts up her head, and for a time seems something like genius; when taste is bad, she is very bad indeed. In those days men imitated Molinet; they aimed at the "Rime Empérière," or at least at the "Rime Couronnée." If they could succeed in the "Rime Retrograde," their reputation was made. And bad as the model was, the copy was worse. When Marot came, all began to imitate him, and, for a time at least, good taste reigned, to fall again

before the pedantries of Ronsard, and to rise once more when Malherbe reopened the undefiled well of French. So, now, dozens of men and women write verses which in the last century would have placed them in the collections of British poets, but which are, nevertheless, only copies in a style due to Tennyson, Browning, or Wordsworth.

These lesser bards, the imitators of Molinet, Crétin, and company, followed blindly after their leaders, worshipping at the shrine of Dulness.

> "The gathering number, as it moves along,
> Involves a vast involuntary throng;
> Who, gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
> Roll in her vortex, and her power confess."

There is something touching about these forgotten poets, their vanity, their self-satisfaction, their laborious monuments of industry and patience. They have necessarily fallen into oblivion, but one would willingly spare them contempt. Like better men, they followed Literature as their mistress. They had no rules except what they made for themselves, but they had learning enough to know that there were styles of writing far higher than had yet been attempted in France. They aimed at being sublime, and fell into bathos; at being artistic and polished, and became ridiculously involved and clumsy. Let us give them credit for their aims. Their great fault was a fault growing out of the disproportion, peculiar to the literary history of France, of language to thought. The instruments were too delicate for the workmen; the art of the mechanic unequal to the material he worked upon. They found a language ready for the reception

of a Dante, and they offered a Molinet. They confounded the facility with which they wrote with genius, and where they could produce words, were careless about the matter. But they were still lovers of literature, and nourished a flame which they handed down to better men. To keep the light burning is something. It is worthy of praise even to cry, to a careless world,

> "Nay but you—who do not love her—
> Is she not pure gold, our mistress?"

CHAPTER IX.

MAISTRE PIERRE PATHELIN.

THIS, the earliest French comedy, worthy the name, is too remarkable a piece to be passed over in any mention of early French poetry. In some respects it is certainly the most note-worthy production of the fifteenth century. If we compare it with the earliest efforts of English comedy —with Gammer Gurton, for instance—it is impossible not to admire the extraordinary superiority of the French language, the French versification, and, above all, the French humour. There is absolutely none of that clownish uncouthness which distinguishes all our earliest attempts at comedy, there is no horse-play, there are no Fescennine jokes, there needs no Hircius or Spongius to tickle the fancy of the country audience who first heard it—if, indeed, it was acted first at Poitiers, as seems probable. Where the English buffoon tumbles and roars, the French light comedian, with a gallant and courtly air, cajoles his victim, and after all his thousand tricks and turns illustrates the temporary success and ultimate discomfiture of roguery.

The comedy was first produced about 1470; in language,

though greatly superior, taste, and in humour, it resembles the *Répues Franches*, falsely attributed to Villon. It was immensely successful. It was acted in all parts of France. Professor Reuchlin translated it into Latin, and made his pupils play it at Heidelberg in 1497. Another and a better translation was made by Connibert in 1512. It became a storehouse of proverbs. From it came the word *pathelinер*. It went through twenty-five editions, at least, in a hundred years.

It has been assigned to half-a-dozen authors, who may be reduced to two, Pierre Blanchet, and Antoine de la Sale. The latter edited, in 1456, the Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, and must have been probably too old to be the author of Pathelin in 1470. The former was a barrister at Poitiers. He is known to have written farces as well as songs. Bouchet—Bouchet the voluminous—wrote his epitaph:

> "Cy gist, dessoubs ce lapideux cachet,
> Le corps de feu maistre Pierre Blanchet,
> En son vivant, poëte satyrique,
> Hardy sans lettre, et fort joyeux comique.
> Luy, jeune estant, il suyvoit le Palais
> Et composait souvent rondeaux et lais:
> Faisoit jouer sur eschaffaulx Bazoche,
> Et y jouoit par grant art sans reproche."

Bouchet meant well, though his verse is not so good as might be.

It does not much matter who the author was. Let him enjoy an anonymous reputation. M. P. L. Jacob (Bibliophile) is exceedingly indignant with M. Genin, for attributing Pathelin to Antoine de la Sale, but his own case for Blanchet is a very poor one. It rests chiefly on the epitaph of Bouchet.

Here, he says, we learn that Blanchet was a poëte satyrique. Very good; so was the author of Pierre Pathelin. Again, Blanchet was a barrister; "probably," he says—I do not see why, "probably a barrister *sous l'orme* like Pathelin." Again, Blanchet wrote farces—his name was Pierre; like Pathelin, he made a will in rhyme. If anything more is wanting to complete the proof, we have a pun in Pathelin on the word *blanchet*, which means either a white petticoat or a piece of money, or—and what delight to have a triple pun!—the name of the author. And if any one doubts after all this that Pierre Blanchet was the author of Pierre Pathelin, why, he says, let him sit down and find out an author for himself.

In the selections which follow, which I believe to be sufficient to show the character of this little play, I have left in the original those verses which would lose their point by translation.

We may divide it into two Acts. It was, doubtless, performed upon a stage in compartments, one of which was the draper's shop, and the other Pathelin's house. I apologize beforehand for my rough rhymes. They are, at least, tolerably close.

Act I. Scene I. Pathelin's House. Maitre Pierre Pathelin and Guillemette his wife; a poorly-furnished room.

"*Pathelin.* Holy Mary! I toil and I cheat:
Fair play and foul; by work and deceit:
And yet 'tis certain, my Guillemette,
Whatever I do, no richer we get.

Guillemette. Yes: and what's worse, the neighbours aver,
You are not so wise, by half, as you were:

You that everyone used to seek—
So crafty, so cunning, so clever to speak—
Wait now, neglected by all the folk,
And they call you the 'Advocate under the oak.'[1]

P. Yet—I say it in sorrow, not pride—
There is not through all the country side,
In learning and wit a man my compare—
Always excepting his Worship the Mayor.

* * * * *

G. And if you are learned, where is the good?
The larder is empty; we have no food.
Look at our clothes, they are all in rags:
When will your wisdom replenish your bags?"

Pathelin hits on an idea:

"Taisez vous. Par ma conscience,
Si je vueil mon sens esprouver,
Je scauray bien où en trouver
Des robes et des chaperons."

She will not believe him.

"Vous n'avez ne denier ne maille,
Que ferez vous?

PATHELIN.

Vous ne sçavez.
Belle dame, se vous n'avez
Du drap, pour nous deux largement,
Si me desmentez hardiment.
Quel couleur vous semble plus belle?
D'ung gris vert? d'ung drap de Brucelle?
Ou d'autre? Il me le faut sçavoir.

GUILLEMETTE.

Tel que vous le pourrez avoir;
Qui emprunte ne choisit mye.

[1] "Avocat sous l'orme," *i. e.* one whose only office was the shade of the elm in the village 'place.'

PATHELIN.

Pour vous, deux aulnes et demye,
Et, pour moy, trois, voire bien quatre,
Ce sont....

GUILLEMETTE.

Vous comptez sans rabattre:
Que dyable les vous prestera?

PATHELIN.

Que vous en chault qui ce sera?
On me les prestera vrayement,
À rendre au jour du Jugement:
Car plus tost ne sera ce point."

Exit Pathelin, big with thought. Guillemette stays behind, despondent and doubtful.

Scene 2. The Draper's shop at the fair. Pathelin looks about in apparent uncertainty.

"Is this his place? it cannot be:
A draper's shop? the name—'tis he.
(*Enters*) God be with all.
Draper. And with you, beau Sire.
P. The strangest chance that brought me here:
The very man—your hand, my friend—
That I wanted to find.—Your health—does it mend?"

After manifesting an extraordinary anxiety on this point, he begins in a quite novel and unexpected manner. I imagine that the draper knows him by sight, but has never spoken to him before, for Pathelin evidently knows a little about the good man's connections.

"Ha!—well. What a man! what a wonderful brain!
God keep his soul—your father's, I mean.
What a merchant, too, so thoughtful, so wise,
(Upon my word, you have the same eyes).

If God have mercy on any, why then
He surely will pity your father.

D. Amen.

P. Dear, dear—a hundred times, ay, more,—
Truly and fully he told me before,
The times that were coming, the very events:
Even then he was reckoned....

D. Sir, no offence:
Forgive my rudeness—be seated, I pray.

P. I do very well as I am, but....

D. Nay—
Be seated, I beg you.

P. To please you—ah, well!
None other than marvels he used to foretell.
You 'll see when I tell you—Good Heavens! 'tis strange,
From father to son I perceive no change.
His father exactly, the eyes and the nose,
The very same dimples the same lips disclose:
Hard set for a quarrel he 'd be, in truth,
Who would dare to maintain that you, forsooth,
Are not your own father's son. That nature
So should imitate every feature
Is passing wondrous—so we are made—
Your aunt Laurentia—is she yet dead?

D. No.

P. I am glad: ah! she was a belle,
Tall and graceful; just *your* shape, well—
In all the country, search it over—
Such a race as yours 'twere hard to discover.
The more I see you, the more I recall
The face of your father—God rest his soul!
Two drops of water are not more alike.
How brave he was—so ready to strike!
How worthy a creature—so glad to lend
His money to any deserving friend.
And how he laughed! all out of his heart.
Would that the worst man in this part
Only resembled him. My brother,

We shouldn't then be cheating each other
As we do now. [*Takes up a piece of cloth.*
What capital cloth!
I never saw stuff so soft and smooth.
D. From my own sheep's wool that cloth is made.
P. Is it? How clever he is at his trade!
D. Well, one must labour if one would thrive.
P. 'Tis true, most true. As I'm alive,
I cannot resist this beautiful stuff,
I came not to buy—but there, enough.
Eighty crowns I had laid aside
For another purpose; but now, if I tried
I could not avoid leaving twenty with you.
I *must* have a coat, and my Guillemette, too,
She *shall* have a gown. The longer I gaze,
The more I like it.
D. Just as you please,
Only this cloth is as dear as cream,
Twenty francs will go like a dream.
P. I don't care, let it cost what it will."

He insists on paying the "denier à Dieu", with the pious remark: "ne faisons rien qui soit, ou Dieu ne se nomme." They then have a dispute about the price.

"*D.* Chascune aulne vous coustera
Vingt et quatre solz.
P. Non sera.
Vingt et quatre solz! Saincte Dame!
D. Il la m'a cousté, par ceste ame!
Autant m'en fault, se vous l'avez.
P. Dea! c'est trop.
D. Ha! vous ne sçavez
Comment le drap est enchéry!
Trestout la bétail est pery,
Cest yver par la grant froidure.
P. Vingt solz; vingt solz.
D. Et je vous jure
Que j'en auray ce que je dy.

Or attendez à samedy:
Vous verrez que vault? La toyson,
Dont il souloit estre foyson,
Me cousta, à la Magdeleine,
Huict blancs, par mon serment, de laine,
Que je soulois avoir pour quatre.
P. Par le sang bleu! sans plus debattre,
Puis qu'ainsi va, donc je marchande;
Sus—aulnez.
D. Et je vous demande
Combien vous en faut il avoir?
P. Il est bien aysé à sçavoir.
Quel lé a-il?
D. Lé de Brucelle.
P. Trois aulnes pour moy, et pour elle
(Elle est haute) deux et demye.
Ce sont six aulnes... Ne sont mye...
Et ne sont... Que je suis bec jaune!
D. Il ne s'en fault que demye aulne,
Pour faire les six justement.
P. J'en prendray six tout rondement."

Having got the cloth, the question arises about payment. Will the draper come to his house to get the money? The draper thinks it will be out of his way. Upon this Pathelin affects indignation. Out of his way, indeed! it is only an excuse to avoid going to his house on a friendly visit. Now, will he come up and eat roast goose that day? no ceremony; and he cannot think of allowing the draper to carry the cloth, he will take it himself—so, under his arm. The draper promises to make his appearance, and Pathelin promises the money; takes the cloth, and goes. Outside the shop he says—

"Or? et quoy doncques?
Or! dyable! je n'y failly oncques!
Non. Or! Qu'il puist estre pendu

Eudea, il ne m'a pas vendu,
A mon mot: ce a esté au sien:
Mais il sera payé au mien.
Il luy faut or? on le luy fourre;
Pleust à Dieu qu'il ne fist que courre,
Sans cesser, jusques à fin de paye!
Sainct Jehan! il feroit plus de voye,
Qu'il n'y a jusque à Pampelune."

And the draper, left in his shop, shews himself as big a rogue as the lawyer.

"Ilz ne verront soleil ny lune,
Les escuz qu'il me baillera,
De l'an, qui ne les emblera (unless any one steals them)
Or, n'est il si fort entendeur,
Qui ne treuve plus fort vendeur:
Ce trompeur là est bien bec jaune,
Quand pour vingt et quatre solz l'aulne,
A prins drap qui n'en vaut pas vingt."

Scene 3. Pathelin's house again. He returns bringing back the cloth. It is of course needless to say that there is no roast goose. Guillemette is astonished at his success, and he relates the whole story, how he tickled the vanity of the draper, and wheedled and coaxed him. Guillemette is reminded of the fable of the crow with the cheese. Pathelin discloses his plan of operations to be followed when the draper comes for his money, to which his wife accedes, only begging her husband to remember that disastrous Saturday when he was put in the pillory, and when everybody cried out on him for his rogueries. He goes to bed, pretending sickness, and has just made his arrangements when the draper comes.

This scene is very good. I leave it in the original.

Draper. Hau ! maistre Pierre ?
Guillemette. (*opening the door*) Helas ! sire,
Par Dieu ! se vous voulez rien dire,
Parlez plus bas !
D. Dieu vous, gard, dame !
G. Ha ! plus bas !
D. Et quoy ?
G. Bon grè m'ame...
D. Où est-il ?
G. Las ! où doit il estre ?
D. Le qui ?
G. Ha ! c'est mal dit, mon maistre :
Où est il ? et Dieu, par sa grace,
Le sache ! Il garde la place
Où il est, le povre martir,
Unze semaines, sans partir....
D. De qui ?
G. Pardonnez moy, je n'ose
Parler haut : je croy qu'il repose :
Il est un petit aplommé :
Hélas ! il est si assommé,
Le povre homme....
D. Qui ?
G. Maistre Pierre.
D. Ouay ! n'est il pas venu querre
Six aulnes de drap maintenant ?
G. Qui, luy ?
D. Il en vient tout venant,
N'a pas la moytié d'ung quart d'heure.
Delivrez moy : dea ! je demeure
Beaucoup. Cà, sans plus flageoller,
Mon argent ?
G. Hé ! sans rigoller,
Il n'est pas temps que l'on rigolle.
D. N'est ce pas ceans que je suy
Cheuz maistre Pierre Pathelin ?
G. Ouy. Le mal sainct Mathelin
Sans le mien, au cueur vous tienne !
Parlez bas.

D. Le dyable y avienne!
Ne le oseray-je demander?
G. A Dieu me puiser commander!
Bas, se ne voulez qu'il s'esveille.
D. Quel bas? Voulez vous en l'oreille,
Au fons du puys, ou de la cave?"

The draper, naturally in a great rage, will not believe that Pathelin is ill; Guillemette begs him over and over again to speak low, and presently the faint voice of the sick man is heard from his chamber talking, as one in great danger and fear of death, with a doctor, one Maistre Jehan. The draper is half convinced. Have they a goose roasting at the fire?—"Goose, indeed!" says Guillemette, "a pretty thing for sick men to eat." Quite humbled and confused the draper says,

"Je vous pry qu'il ne vous desplaise:
Car je cuydoye fermement....
Encor! par le sainct sacrement—
Dieu!... Dea! or voys je sçavoir...."

He goes back to his shop to measure his cloth, and see if he has been dreaming—

"Je scay bien que je dois avoir
Six aulnes, tout en une piece:
Mais cette femme me despiece
De tous pointz mon entendement...
Il les a mes vrayement?...
Non a, dea! il ne se peut joindre!
J'ay veu la mort qui le vient poindre:
Au moins, ou il le contrefaict...
Et si a! il les print de faict,
Et les mist dessoubz son aissèlle,
Par saincte Marie la belle!...
Non a! Je ne sçay si je songe.

Je n'ay point aprins que je donge
Mes drapz, en donnant, ne veillant?" etc.

"Is he gone?" asks Pathelin; "Yes," answers Guillemette, "but he may come back. Do not move. Our business would be altogether lost, if he were to find you up." They laugh over the unfortunate draper. Meantime he comes back, thinks he hears Guillemette laugh, and knocks at the door furiously. She comes out as before; this time Pathelin is in a raging delirium, and raves, singing,

"Up—up, Queen of Guitars—
Bring her at once: bring her, ye varlets.
I know how she was brought to bed
Of four-and-twenty little Guitarlets.
Their father's the Abbot of Invernaux,
And to the christening I must go——"

Quoth Guillemette:

"Alas! to Heaven direct your prayers,
And don't be singing about guitars."

The draper will not yet believe. He knows that he is not dreaming, because he has measured the cloth and finds that six ells are really missing, and to the expostulations of Guillemette he only says, "Heu! quel malade."

Then Pathelin's delirium grows worse. He raves in Limousin patois, because, as Guillemette explains, he had an uncle of that country; then in Picard dialect, because his mother was from Picardy; then in Flemish; then in Norman, because he was at school in Normandy; then in Breton, because his grandmother came from Brittany; and then in Latin, when Guillemette cries out:

"Par mon serment, il se mourra,
Tout parlant! Comment il escume!
Veez vous pas comment il fume?
À haultaine divinité,
Or s'en va son humanité!
Or demourray je povre et lasse."

The draper thinking him *in articulo mortis*, hastens out of the way, and returns to his shop, making up his mind that it was the devil and no other that robbed him. Pathelin gets out of bed, and he and his wife congratulate each other. This may be called the termination of the first act.

The second act contains the part of Pierre Pathelin best known and most frequently quoted.

Scene I.—The Draper's Shop.

Enter Thibault Aignelet, his shepherd, who has been summoned to answer a charge of robbing his wool and killing his sheep. The draper, still confused with the events of the morning, is very angry with him, but scarcely, as yet, coherent.

You shall pay me back, whatever befal,
Six ells, I mean the wool and all
The beasts you have killed: you shall pay me with tears,
For the mischief you've done me this last ten years.

Aignelet. Alas, my master, believe them no more:
They wrong me, good sir.

D. You rascal, before
Next Saturday comes you shall pay in full,
Six ells of cloth—I mean the wool
You have robbed of my beasts.

A. What cloth? what ells?
Surely you think about something else.
Holy Saint Leu! so angry you are,
To say a word I hardly dare."

Finding the draper not to be pacified, Thibault betakes himself to Maistre Pathelin, and asks him to act as his advocate. To his counsel he confesses that he has killed and eaten no less than thirty sheep in three years, pretending that they were sick and had died.

"Are there any witnesses," asks Pathelin, "to prove these facts?"

> "Prouver, Sire?" says the shepherd, "Saincte Marie!
> Par tous les saints de Paradis,
> Pour ung il en trouvera dix,
> Qui contre moy deposeront."

"That," observes the barrister, "is a circumstance likely to injure your cause materially. But let us see." He fixes on a plan, part of which is that the shepherd is to affect idiocy, and to make no replies whatever, except 'Bée'; that he is not to appear as his barrister by previous arrangement; and that for his services he, Pierre Pathelin, is to be paid handsomely.

The scene changes to the court, when the draper begins to set forth his case. Seeing Pathelin, he stops and gets confused. The sight of him recalls the memory of his cloth, and he changes the accusation, to the bewilderment of the Judge, from the shepherd to the lawyer, and from sheep to cloth. . .[1] The judge forces him back to his original charge and he begins again:

> *Judge.* Laissez en paix cest accessoire,
> Et venons au principal.
> *D.* Voire,
> Monseigneur: mais le cas me touche:

[1] Here first occurs the proverb, "revenons à nos moutons."

Toutes fois par ma foy, ma bouche
Meshuy[1] un seul mot n'en dira.
Une autrefois, il en yra
Ainsi qu'il ne pourra aller:
Il le me convient avaller
Sans mascher.
Well—to my case I'll keep:
I gave six ells,—I mean my sheep—
I pray your pardon—this rogue, I say,
Who ought to be guarding my sheep this day,
He promised to pay me six crowns—not so,
I mean the shepherd—three years ago,
Promised he'd loyally keep and guard
My flock of sheep with watch and ward;
Would do them no damage, and now, behold,
He gives me neither the cloth nor the gold.
Ah, master Peter!—This rascal stole
From the backs of my sheep their fleece and their wool—
He told me they died: he said they were sick:
When he beat out their brains himself with a stick,
Quite healthy and fat, without sickness or harm.
He tucked my broad cloth under his arm;
Off he went in a mighty haste;
Bade me presently with him feast;
Promised the money at the same time.
J. Why: here is neither reason nor rhyme.
The man is mixing up cloth and sheep."

Pathelin offers, at this juncture, to defend the cause of the shepherd, who appears poor and half-witted.

"*P.* Come now, my man, let us hear the affair.
Aignelet. Bée.
P. What is *bée?* your sheep are not here.
Let us learn. Speak up for your own good.
A. Bée.
P. Now, now, let us have either yea or nay.
A. Bée.

[1] meshuy, magis hodie, from to-day, henceforth.

P. Send him back to his sheep, my lord,
He is clearly a fool.
D. A fool? By my word,
He is wiser than you are.
P. Let him be sent
To his sheep without further bewilderment."

The draper, foiled in this way, foams with rage, and turns upon Pathelin with a sort of despair.

"You have my cloth—never mind the wool—
I know your face—I am not a fool—
I know your voice and I know your gown;
I am wise enough to know my own—
My lord, let me tell you the tale.
P. Ah, sir,
Impose restraint on this talker. The stir
About this loss of a sheep or two,—
Three or four—what is it to you?
Not worth a button.
D. What sheep? He repeats
The same old story. For your deceits—
You—you, I mean—you shall pay me them,
By the Lord who was born at Bethlehem.
P. Dear, dear; too much fuss you make, I am sure.
What matters? suppose it were half a score.
Balance your loss against your gain.
D. Look at him, sir, I speak in vain,
I talk of my cloth, and he only replies
About the shepherd. Oh! maker of lies—
Where is my cloth? where is the stuff
You put away under your arm?
P. Enough.
My lord, I ask the court to forgive
This poor born idiot. Let him live.
You will not hang him: he ne'er did harm:
As naked, as innocent as a worm.
Reflect, my lord: a paltry score
Of fleeces gone—it could not be more."

* * * *

Finally, the judge dismisses the case, and declares the sitting at an end. After a few more words with Pathelin, the angry draper walks away. Then the lawyer is left alone with his client.

"Now, Aignelet, is your business done?
A. Bée.
P. The cause is finished; the judge is gone:
Don't say *bée* any more, my friend.
Did I not counsel you well to the end?
Did I not play him a turn, eh?
A. Bée.
P. There: there: no one will hear you. Say,
Speak out plainly: don't be afraid.
A. Bée.
P. 'Tis time for me to be paid.
A. Bée.
P. Very well you have played your part,
Your grave face went to the judge's heart.
A. Bée.
P. Don't say that any more, I beseech.
Pay me now.
A. Bée.
P. Recover your speech.
Pay me at once and let me go.
A. Bée.
P. No more béeing. That will do.
I don't like trifling. Pay me my fee.
A. Bée.
P. You mean to mock me? *you* mock *me?*
I swear you shall pay me at once—Here!—Give.
A. Bée.
P. You dare laugh at me? (*aside*) As I live,
'Tis all I am likely to get.
* * * *
My friend, if you *bée* to gratify
Yourself, pray say so—but think that I
Would rather not talk any more. But come,

Will you take your supper with me at home?
A. Bée.
P. By St. John, he *bée's* at his ease.
For once the goslings lead the geese.
(*Aside*) Now I thought myself the king of all cheats:
Doctor in quibbles, prince of deceits,
Giver of words and bonds to pay,
To be redeemed—on Judgment-day—
And a simple rustic defeats my claims.
(*To Shepherd*)
Here, you sir, by holy St. James,
Could I but find a serjeant near,
Your lot should be prison and prison cheer.
A. Bée.
P. Heu! Bée! L'en me puisse pendre,
Se je ne voys faire venir
Un bon serjeant. Mesavenir
Luy puisse il, s'il ne t'emprisonne!
(Le Bergier s'enfuyant)
S'il me tienne, je luy pardonne."

This is the end of the piece; Pathelin, with poetical justice, having the tables turned upon him by the very man he had taught to deceive. The conception of the scene in which the draper confuses the two villainies in his mind is equal to anything in Molière.

The *Nouveau Pathelin* and the *Testament de Pathelin* are sometimes found with the farce. They are very fair imitations, but not by the same author. The former is founded on a story taken from the *Répues Franches* of Villon.

CHAPTER X.

DE SAINT GELAIS.

THE world, which looks upon the backslidings of mankind with a degree of disfavour exactly in the inverse proportion to their birth and station, put Villon in prison on a bread and water diet, and gave Octavien de Saint Gelais a bishopric. Encouraged by this stimulus to virtue, the prelate reformed and sinned no more, while the ragamuffin rogue, his brother bard, only reformed to sin again. St. Gelais's father, however, was no less a person than the Marquis de Montlieu and St. Aulaye, while Villon's father was a simple cordwainer; and while Villon scraped through the university as best he could, the young Octavien was carefully trained under the eyes of his cousin Guy de Fontenay, Regent of the College of St. Barbe, and Martin le Maistre, Chaplain to Louis the Eleventh. He was in course of time turned out a complete scholar, as things went then, and a young priest with an ardent zeal for everything in life except religion. He lived hard and worked hard, so hard that at twenty-four he was incapacited, by illness and exhaustion, from any work but the work of

his order. By the good offices of king Charles the VIIIth he was able to obtain of the pope the Bishopric of Angoulème, whither he retired, and for some ten years led the life of a self-denying earnest Christian priest. Thorough in everything, he seems to have brought to his work the same zeal he had before manifested for pleasure. He died almost in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1502, being then only thirty-six years of age.

> "O Sainct Gelais, révérend orateur," says Crétin in an ecstasy,
> "De vos écrits les livres sont tous pleins,
> Vostre bon bruict volle par champs et plains,
> Chascun le sçait, de ce ne suis menteur."

His two principal works are "La chasse et Départ d'Amour," which, with an allegorical introduction, contains the poems of his youth; and his "Séjour d'Honneur," written when he was only twenty-four years old, but already saddened and aged by his debaucheries.

In the former he utilised the allegory of Charles of Orleans, where the poet is taken to the Court of Love. This, as I have shown, is found in Chaucer as well as in Charles.

In the "Séjour d'Honneur" his design is to paint the dangers and seductions which surround a young man, and the ease with which he falls into the nets of evil. It is a dream. The poet finds himself with *Sensualité* who persuades him to pleasure; he makes some feeble resistance, but yields at last and goes with her as guide. She takes him pleasantly along a road which they quickly pass over, and come to a place where two ways lead in different directions. He asks where he is. "You have

travelled," says his guide, "over the road of *Fleurie Jeunesse.* All men pass over this road, but so quickly that they do not perceive it, till they have come to the end of it."

"C'est appellé ce sentier
Chemin de Fleurie jeunesse,
Flairant, souef, doulx et entier,
Où espine ne esglantier
Les passans nullement ne blesse.
Icy est l'entrée et l'addresse
Où tous humains créés et fais
Vont et viennent comme tu fais.
L'entrer y est tant agréeable,
Mais le retour est impossible."

Further, there are not even any traces left of the footsteps of those who have gone before. He asks after the damsels.

"Mais je n'en peus ouyr nouvelles;
Si en y a passé cent mille,
Tant de champs comme de la ville:
Leur beaulté n'a pû résister
A la deffaicte de leur vie....
* * * *
Hélas! la voye est tendre et verte,
Mais il y a faulte dedans,
Car on la passe en bien peu d'ans."

But what are the two roads open to the traveller after coming to the end of Fleurie Jeunesse? The one on the right leads to *Bonne Fin*, that on the left to *Déduict Mondain.* It is almost needless to say that the poet takes the road on the left, still accompanied by his guide. They arrive at the River and Port of Mundane Joy (Liesse). Thither an immense crowd is hurrying and pressing, most

of whom get drowned. Boccaccio, says Saint Gelais, will tell us all about these unlucky wretches.

As the day is declining *Sensualité* takes her traveller to an inn kept by *Peu d'Avis*, where they pass the night. Next day they embark on a ship named *Abus*, and set sail on the *Mer mondaine*. There is singing on board and joyous stories, but the poet takes little pleasure in it all, being saddened by the sight of the many corpses floating about in the waves. Some of these he recognizes, and makes the theme of admirable reflections. Louis XI., Francis, Duke of Brittany, Alexander, Duke of Albany, are there. *Sensualité* interrupts his musings, and endeavours to prove to him that the world, after all, does offer real pleasures.

Meantime they arrive at the Island of *Vaine Espérance*, which is ruled over by a lady who receives them courteously, and proclaims her power and goodness.

"Je suis celle qui mes vassaulx conduys
A appeter et vouloir mille choses:
Je leur baille les moyens et conduys
Pour les faire susceptibles, et duys
Prendre et cueillir entre espines les roses:
Brief, je leur dy tant de textes et gloses
Qu'il n'est jeune ne vieillard décrépit
Qui n'attende d'avoir par moy respit.
* * * *
Je fays harnois et estendarts reluyre:
Je fays monter gens d'armes à cheval:
Je fays chasteaulx et grosses tours construyre, . . .
Souventes fois aussi les fays destruyre
Pour parvenir à honneur triumphal."

Vaine Espérance takes the poet into the orchard, and makes him eat the fruit of the tree called *Joyeuse attente*.

This has a most exhilarating effect. Sadness disappears; joy takes possession of his mind; he feels himself capable of anything.

"Je prens une nouvelle mode,
Nouveau train, nouvelles façons,
Marchant fin comme ung Roy Hérode:
Plus ne veux Digeste ne Code;
J'ay bien apprins autres leçons..."

He is invited to join a dance, in which persons of all ages, conditions, and qualities take part. There is King Henry of England, who

"Mist le Royaulme de France en griefs,"

but who was assailed by so rude a war that he died, he and his soldiers. "I knew him by his three Leopards." There is Duke John of Burgundy, who caused to be slain

"Le duc Loys d'Orleans, très prochain
Frère et amy du noble Roy de France."

There were, in short, Kings, Dukes, Popes, Cardinals, "saulve l'honneur des Ecclésiastiques," Officers, Regents, Marshals, Provosts, Bailiffs, Presidents,—all dancing together. The poet dances too, and so well that he gains applause. He falls in with the tone of the place, and becomes daily more and more given up to pleasure. One day, falling asleep from fatigue, he is awakened by a noise like thunder, which caused him so much fright that for an instant he wished he was a "cordelier, singing hymns and verses." The thunder announced the visit of *Grace Divine*, who came to assure him that *Vaine Espérance* was deceitful, and that the only thing for him to do was to quit his

careless way of life: she shewed him the beauty of virtue, and the real and lasting pleasures she bestows on those who join her party. After this, in spite of the remonstrances of *Vaine Espérance*, he leaves the island, and, still accompanied by *Sensualité* and *Abus*, embarks on *La Mer mondaine perilleuse*.

Again he is afflicted with the sight of dead bodies floating in the water. He recognizes this time John, Duke of Bourbon, Charles of Bourbon, Cardinal and Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal de Foix, and a great many others. Among them, also, the body of his own father.

> "Entre ses bras ung grand tableau tenoit,
> Dont assez plus m' esbahis qu' oncques mais:
> L' epitaphe mot à mot contenoit
> Tous tels escripts qui pas ne furent laids:
> Cy gist Pierre nommé de Sainct Gelais,
> En son vivant Chevalier très honneste,
> Qui s' est trouvé en maint noble conqueste
> Servant les Roys: Seigneur fût de Montlieu:
> Son ame soit posée devant Dieu."

His grief was so great that he was nearly throwing himself overboard into the sea; only the voice of his conscience prevented him from committing suicide.

On coming to land he gets rid of *Abus*, but *Sensualité* remains with him. They have to get to the *Val du monde* by the *Forest d' Adventures*, where they see many curious and fearful things. There is a river of tears, innumerable footsteps of men and women, an inconceivable multitude of ruined habitations, a deep twilight obscurity. It is explained that the forest preserves the traces of all that time has destroyed. Here is a magnificent opportunity for the poet

to plunge into history—for us, too, to skip a great piece. At last they get to the end of the Forest. *Sensualité*, a good deal improved, one would hope, by the sermons she has heard, points out the *Chateau d'Honneur; Bon Vouloir* presents him to Charles the Eighth; *Raison* delivers him from *Sensualité*, and takes him off, penitent, to the hermit *Entendement*. He prostrates himself, and says:

"Père doulx et piteux,
* * * *
Quoique l'heure soit moult tarde
Je me soubmets à vostre garde,
Protestant de vivre et mourir
En vraye foy, sans plus courir
Après péché, comme souloye
Du temps que jeune au monde estoye."

The Hermit gives him an examination on points of sound faith, confers absolution on him, and takes him to the Chapel to render thanks to God.

Besides the versification of this poem, which is remarkably easy and natural, there are some good points in the allegory. The idea of the road of *Fleurie Jeunesse*, which we do not know till we have passed it, and that of the island of *Vaine Espérance*, where the countless crowds of men, intoxicated with fond imaginations, dance in a ceaseless round, and fill themselves with pleasures which never satisfy, are highly poetical. The reader will remark, too, how, through all his sadness, moral reflections, and repentance, the adviser who sticks to him the longest, is the most difficult to shake off, and leaves him the last, is *Sensualité*.

One word of apology for all our allegorists. Their elaborate pictures and personifications weary us now. Very few of us have read Spenser through, still fewer have read Chaucer's Imitation of the *Roman de la Rose*. We must, however, remember that the allegory to the readers of that day afforded the same sort of mental pabulum that the novel does to ourselves. Romances were not wanting, and, indeed, towards the end of the fifteenth century, were greatly multiplied. But about this time the taste for allegory was giving way to that of romances. And just as we care little about the plot of a novel, provided the writing is good—there is very little plot about any of Dickens's books—not much in Thackeray's—rather a clumsy one in George Eliot's best—so I imagine the good readers of allegory were not so careful of the story, as of the reflections introduced and the allusions to passing events. Thus Octavien mentions seeing the bodies of Louis XI., of Cardinal de Bourbon, and other great men, who died about that time. If we take all the allegories and write their stories they are silly enough; but nothing could be sillier than a great many of the stories of our very best novels. And what Sir Walter Scott was to his generation, Octavien de Saint Gelais, in a less degree, was to his. The popularity of the *raconteur* will never die, but the style of the *conte* varies. What was allegory in the fifteenth century, and romance in the sixteenth, is novel in the nineteenth.

His smaller pieces are contained in the *Chasse d'Amour;* they form the usual collection of rondeaux and ballads. Some of them shew a spirit of what may be called independence in love, rare to meet with in those times when

love excluded laughter, when the expectant lover was obliged to be ready with sighs of portentous magnitude, and the successful lover could do little better than shed tears of happiness. But this is what Octavien says:

"Je servirai selon qu'on me paira,
Et me mettrai du tout à mon devoir:
Mais si ma dame refuse de me voir,
Incontinent la première m'aura:
Et puis en parle, qui parler en saura.
Selon le bien que je pourrai avoir,
Je servirai."

In the words of the English poet,

"If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?"

Here, too, are four lines of exceptional style:

"Bonnes gens, j'ay perdu ma dame:
Qui la trouvera, sur mon âme,
Combien qu'elle soit belle et bonne,
De très bon cœur je la luy donne;"

which may be quite literally translated:

"Good folk, good folk, I've lost my wife—
Whoever will find her, upon my life,
Fair though she be of face and limb,
With all my heart I give her to him."

Here is another of sentiment equally opposed to the puling spirit of most of his contemporary poets. "Monsieur," he says, "vaut bien Madame":

"On m'a donné le bruit et renommée
D'avoir esté grandement amoureux,
Le temps passé, d'nne qu'on m'a nommée.
On n'en scait rien: ils jugent tout par eux:

Qu'ils seachent donc que point ne suis de ceux
Lesquels, aimant, ne sont aimés de dame:
S'el ne me veut, aussi je ne la veux:
Ce m'est tout un: monsieur vaut bien madame."

It is quite refreshing to get this bit of steady unaffected sense after all the affectation we have waded through. Poor Charles of Orleans would have been horrified indeed had he read this atrocious ballad. But he was dead and gone; and Octavien, apparently, had got hold of his manuscripts and was 'cribbing' from them.

Here is another specimen of his repentance. Observe in what a gentlemanly way he pulls out his cambric handkerchief and wipes his eyes. The tone of Villon, after all, *has* got a sort of hangdog convict snuffle about it; while this is genuine well-bred grief, and there is no relapse back into the slough as with poor François, who weeps his sins one moment, and considers the ways of the *femmelettes* the next. Still one can hardly help the feeling that this holy man did not turn from his evil ways till they, so to speak, turned from him. When he would no longer practise them he perceived their wickedness; he has, however, the credit of not only parting with them, but of practising better things. The repentant rake, one generally suspects, would fall to his bad courses again if his infirmities allowed him; and behind the lamentation of a sinner there may sometimes lurk a vision of sin, pleasant to think upon and fair to view. But hear Monseigneur of Augoulême:

"Ores connois mon temps premier perdu:
De retourner jamais ne m'est possible.
De jeune, vieux; de beau, laid suis venu.
En jeunes ans, rien n'étoit impossible

À moi jadis, hélas! ce me sembloit.
C'étoit abus qui caultement embloit
Ce peu qu'avois alors de connoissance,
Quand je vivois en mondaine plaisance.

Des dames lors étois bien recueilli,
Entretenant mes douces amourettes.
Amour m'avoit son servant accueilli
Portant bouquets de boutons et fleurettes:
Mais maintenant, puisque porte lunettes,
De Cupido ne m'accointerai plus:
De sa maison suis chassé et forclus."

There is nothing here more vulgar than the common lot of humanity. He who was young is now old. It is the old burden.

"Love will not clip him,
Maids will not lip him,
Maud and Marion pass him by.
Youth it is sunny:
Age has no honey:—
What can an old man do but die?"

The song-writer takes the lighter joys and sorrows of life for his theme in all ages. As Hood sang for us, so St. Gelais and Charles of Orleans sang for the 15th century; if not as gracefully and as easily, at least as pleasantly to their ears. Those who wish anything deeper than song-writing must look for it farther. My authors are song-writers. In different words they all sing to the same tune. The bright spring-tide; the song of the birds; the leaves of the trees; the flowers by the wayside; the bright eyes of their mistress; the one great pleasure of life, Love; its one great duty, courage; its one great evil, age; these are

their inspirations and their themes. What Octavien de St. Gelais wrote after his repentance I have no means of ascertaining; perhaps hymns, which have not been preserved; but I can find nothing of his which at all leads me to think that his views of pleasure altered as his powers of gaining pleasure contracted. Certainly, his philosophy may all be expressed, like that of his contemporaries, by the little ballad of Hood's, of which I have already quoted one verse:

> "Spring it is cheery:
> Winter is dreary:
> Green leaves hang, but the brown must fly:
> When he's forsaken,
> Withered and shaken,
> What can an old man do but die?"

Where the middle ages surpass us, is in strength. As we can no longer brace on their armour and ride their jousts, so we no longer seem able to throw ourselves with their thoroughness into whatever we try. Failure with them meant generally ruin, helpless and hopeless; the disgraced politician lost his head; the wounded soldier died on the field; the defeated controversialist was roasted at the stake; and there was no medicine to restore health to the broken-down man of pleasure. Therefore Saint Gelais, an old man at twenty-three, was dead at thirty-six; but, having the strength of the age, with the same earnestness as he had been a sinner, he became a saint; and, as Bishop of Angoulême, displayed all those christian virtues which, as young deacon and priest, he had openly neglected and dragged in the dust.

There were other members of the family who distinguished themselves. Indeed, the genealogy of the family is rather curious. Pierre, Marquis de Montlieu, etc., had six or seven sons. Of these, Jean was the author of the Chronicle of France; Jacques became Dean of Angoulême and Bishop of Uzès; Octavien, Bishop of Angoulême, and poet; Charles, Archdeacon of Luçon and translator of Judas Maccabæus. Then we find mention of four nephews, no one knows whose sons. Of these two were deans of Angoulême, one getting burned unfortunately for heretically becoming a protestant; one was Bishop of Uzès; he also became a Protestant, and, as all the family loved to do, 'went in' for the whole thing thoroughly, and married a nun. I do not think they caught him, or else one fears that he, too, would have been burned at the stake. The fourth nephew, Mellin, who was generally believed to be the son of Octavien, became the imitator of the Bishop in his gaiety and his poetry, but not in his repentance; at least, so far as has been learned. Mellin was a better poet than Octavien, but he wrote thirty years later, a considerable time in that age of rapid development. As Octavien was the rival and contemporary of Jean Marot, so Mellin was the rival of Clément. Indeed, he is the only poet who can be mentioned with him. Mellin succeeded in short and light pieces, epigrams, triolets, and *folies*. He introduced the sonnet and the *ottava rima* into France. It is almost unnecessary to say that Mellin's profession—he was abbot of Reclus, and chaplain to Henry II., as dauphin and king—imposed no restraints on his life or his writings. When, in later years, that

curious movement for the purification of French set in, he declined to join it, preferring to write Latin rather than Latinized French. A complete account of his works and life would lead us beyond our limits, as in no sense can he be regarded as a predecessor of Clément Marot. It is sufficient to say that he was regarded as one of the foremost men of his time; that he is described as a Poet, a Mathematician, an Orator, a Theologian, a Lawyer, a Physician, an Astrologer; that his satirical powers were so great that "la tenaille de Mellin" became a sort of proverb. Ronsard says,

> "Fais que devant mon Prince
> Désormais plus ne me pince
> La tenaielle de Mellin."

He lived in favour at the court, an early specimen of the witty, worldly French Abbé, enjoying life, like his father, in the island of *Vaine Espérance.* It does not appear that *Raison* ever succeeded in bringing him to *Entendement.* His death was epigrammatic, for, as the doctors were squabbling about his case over his bed, he politely remarked, "Messieurs, je vais vous tirer de peine," and straightway died.

A few specimens of his verses may be given to show the manner of the man. They are all of that light easy kind which ensures a certain immediate popularity. The following is a very well known story, taken from the Italian:

> "Notre vicaire, un jour de feste,
> Chantoit un Agnus gringotté,
> Tant qu'il pouvait à pleine teste,
> Peusant d'Annette estre écouté.

Annette, de l'autre costé,
Pleuroit, attentive à son chant:
Dont le vicaire, en s'approchant,
Lui dit; "Pourquoi pleurez vous, belle?"

"Ah! messire Jean," ce dit elle,
"Je pleure un asne qui est mort,
Qui avoit la voix toute telle
Que vous, quand vous criez si fort."

Mellin was only a writer of *vers de société*, but the writer of the following verses was by no means a contemptible poet.

D'UN BRACELET DE CHEVEUX.

"Cheveux, seul remede et confort
De mon mal violent et fort:
Cheveux longs, beaux et déliés,
Qui mon cœur tant plus fort liez,
Que plus il veut tendre et tascher
À se distraire et détachér:
Cheveux qui futes converture
Du grand chef d'œuvre de nature,
Où le ciel, qui tout clost et voit,
A montré combien il pouvoit
Assembler en petit espace,
De beauté et de bonne grace.
Cheveux qui sçutes estranger
Moi de moi même, et me changer
Tellement, que je vous accuse
De l'effet de ceux de Meduse,
M'ayant rendu un corps sans âme,
On plutost une vive flamme.
Ah! cheveux n'ayez nul regret
De vous voir en lieu si secret,
Loin de vos compagnons dorés,
Qui du monde sont adorés:
Celle qui en peut ordonner,
À moi vous a voulu donner

Pour appui de ma foible vie,
Dont vous n'auriez deuil ni envie,
Si vous sçaviez, O blonds cheveux!
Quel est le bien que je vous veux.

Le moindre de vous m'est plus cher
Qu'autre amie entière toucher,
Ni que les trésors assemblés
Du fin or à quoi ressemblez.
Et toutefois, pour être miens,
N'ayez peur de n'estre point siens:
Elle ne connoist rien à soi·
Plus sien que ce qui est à moi."

The story of the Charlatan who undertook to shew the devil to the people is well-known. When the crowd is assembled, he produces a purse:

"Une bourse large et profonde,
Il leur desploye et leur dit—'Gens de bien,
Ouvrez vos yeux: voyez, y a-t-il rien?'
'Non,' dit quelqu'un des plus près regardans.
'Et c'est,' dit il, 'le Diable, oyez vous bien
Ouvrir sa bourse et ne voir rien dedans.'"

The following Quatrain is one which he wrote in the Psalm-book of Mademoiselle d'Autheville:

"Plus divine œuvre en plus petit espace
Trouver enclose il seroit difficile:
Encores plus voir tant de bonne grace
Et de beauté ailleurs, qu'en Autheville."

These four lines might have been written by Sedley or Rochester, and quoted by Charles:

"Ne tardez plus à consentir,
Ni à tel ami satisfaire.
Vaut mieux faire et se repentir
Que se repentir et rien faire."

In Mellin de Saint Gelais and Clément Marot we see the conquest, at last, of language. Here, with as much ease as has ever been attained in French, thought finds expression; no longer tied, as in the days of Charles of Orleans, to a cold and frigid style; nor, as in the taste of Molinet, diluted by a flood of words and bound by fetters of useless rules. The clouds that hung over the East have cleared away, and the sun has risen. The poets that come after Clément and Mellin are moderns, with new thought and new tastes. But while Clément is the last of the old school, Mellin de Saint Gelais is the first of the new. It is greatly to be wished that a new edition of his works were given to the world. The last edition was in 1719—unless one has been printed lately, which I have not been able to discover. If, further, the edition was accompanied by one of those careful and exhaustive études that only French editors seem able to produce, we should have a most valuable addition to the story of French poetical literature.

"Mellin, nostre plus grande gloire,
Mellin, nostre commun bonheur
Est en bas sua la rive noyre.
De dire plus oultre son nom,
Et son sçavoir et son merite,
Et ses vertus et son renom,
Ce seroit chose trop redicte,"

says a contemporary, lamenting his death. Poets, as Addison insinuates of women, are greatly given to praising their rivals when they are dead.

I cannot resist quoting a little Latin couplet, given by Thevet in his quaint old "Vies des Hommes illustres." Mellin being sick has to take asses' milk, whereat he says:

"Trojam evertit equus—Persas genus auxit equorum—
Nolo ego equos—fatis sat sit Asella meis."

CHAPTER XI.

FRANCIS AND MARGARET.

No account of the early French poets would be complete without some mention of the two who did so much for the cause of letters. This branch of the Valois family, whatever their faults, has the merit of being the first intelligent promoters of letters. Intelligent because they were themselves poets and authors, and in one case at least the best of the time. Their literary proclivities are traced to Valentine the accomplished mother of Charles Duke of Orleans. Francis and Margaret, children of Charles Count of Angoulême, grandchildren of Jean Count of Angoulême, had Charles for their great uncle. There are few families who can boast of so many authors in a hundred years as this of Valois. Charles of Orleans, Francis I., Margaret of Valois, Henry II., Charles IX., Renée of France, like Margaret, an esprit fort; Henry IV., Margaret's grandson; Margaret of France, daughter of Francis; Margaret of France, daughter of Henry II., and first wife of Henry IV; and, if we may reckon her among the number, Mary Queen of Scots. None of them poets of the first rank, but all of

them writers of verse or prose of that kind which can only spring from culture and taste.

The lives of Francis and Margaret belong to the History of France. We have only to do with their literary fame.

Margaret, the first and best of the three Margarets, was two years older than her brother Francis, to whom she was passionately attached, and for whose sake she sacrificed her own happiness and gave up her time and labour. Forced into a political marriage with the Duke of Alençon at an early age, she voluntarily, on his death, married a man whom she disliked, and who illtreated her, the King of Navarre, for the promotion of her brother's objects. Francis, a man of many faults, knew at least how to recompense this devotion by his own love. He, who never deserted a friend, who loved his mother to the extent of committing an injustice for her sake which brought disaster upon France, was not likely to receive coldly a life-long sacrifice from a sister. He suffered himself to be guided by her counsels; he never did anything, so long as she was in Paris, without consulting her: through her he was nearly joining the Reformed party,—perhaps would have done so, had it not been for the battle of Pavia; and, in the very height of the popular frenzy against the Lutherans, sent to prison Beda, syndic of the Theological faculty, for reflecting on Margaret's orthodoxy, and kept him there till he died.

"She was," says a contemporary, "not only the wisest of all the women in France, but of all the men. In all affairs of state there was no counsel so sure as hers to listen to. In the doctrine of Christianity she was so well versed that few people knew better how to treat of it."

She was a politician, a theologian, a scholar, a poet, a novelist. As a politician, she advised, received ambassadors, and during her brother's captivity went herself to Madrid, to treat with Charles. As a theologian she doubtless held views little short of Lutheranism. This point, however, she never reached, ever standing on the bounds of Catholicism, like Erasmus, but never willing to take the fatal step. It must be owned that there was little to gain by openly siding with men as violent as their adversaries, and neither so powerful nor so polite. So long as there was any reasonable chance of reform in the Church, suppression of abuses, and the spread of education among the clergy, schism would have been most impolitic for Margaret or for Francis. It must not be forgotten that there were two sets of Reformers; those who held Catholic views, but objected to present abuses, and those who held the right of private judgment, but with strange inconsistency limited that right to themselves and their followers. Erasmus represents the first set, Calvin the second. For Protestants to claim Erasmus as one of themselves is simply absurd. That Erasmus helped the Reformation, and, in spite of himself, hastened a catastrophe that some wise men have regarded as one of the great calamities of the human race, is of course true.

In the little court of Margaret was plenty of free thought on all topics. To her seems to belong the great merit of being able to regard thought and art independently of their connexion with dogma. To be unsound, in those times, meant generally more than loss of literary fame: it meant personal danger of the worst kind. Dilettante

esprits forts like Clément Marot might well tremble at the horrors of the stake, and though it was not an age when men shrank from pain, the stoutest heart might quail at sight of the unfortunate heretic suspended by thick ropes over a burning pile; dipped and lifted alternately till the cords were burned through and his roasted body dropped living into the fire.

The dread of heresy hung over France in those evil years like a thick black cloud. No writer was safe, no scholar, no statesman; where men met to talk, suspicion lurked in corners to catch at something doubtful. There was no safe subject but love and fair women; no security but in abject submission to the Church. Therefore Francis could only protect Clément Marot in exile; therefore he was compelled to declare, after assisting at the edifying spectacle of the heretic's punishment described above, that if his own son were tainted with heretical leanings he would discard him. It was lucky at least for Margaret that she was not in Paris, but safe in the country at her little court of Béarn. Even here she could not indulge freely in her speculations, and on one occasion the king, her husband, hearing that a lecture was going on in the Queen's chamber, burst in—too late to arrest the lecturer. In a fit of fury he struck the Queen on the face, exclaiming: "Madame! vous en voulez trop sçavoir." Margaret complained to Francis of her husband's ill-treatment, and Francis expostulated with him in strong terms.

In person, Margaret strongly resembled Francis. Like him, "le roi au grand nez," she had a long thin nose; thin, fine lips, and very sweet eyes. Her beauty, of which so

much has been said, seems to have consisted chiefly in her expression; but, whether in right of her position or of her beauty, she was never without worshippers. She stands out, in that age of freedom of morals and licentiousness, as a beautiful example of the best virtues of womanhood, tenderness, and self-sacrifice. Ugly rumours have been set on foot about her, with which we have nothing to do. Sufficient to say that there is not a particle of evidence to substantiate them; that the orthodox were all her enemies; and that the whole tenour of her life contradicts them.

Her poetry was collected after her death by her valet Jean de la Haye, under the title of "Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des princesses, très illustre Royen de Navarre." Her other works are four Mysteries; two farces; *Le Miroir di l'Ame pécheresse*, which was translated by our Lady Elizabeth and printed in 1548; Epistles; two or three smaller pieces, and the Heptameron, a collection of tales after the style of Boccaccio.

Here is her answer to an epigram by Marot, in which the poet complains of his creditors. He wishes that all could be paid like Hélène de Tournon, to whom he owed a 'dixain.'

"Si ceulx à qui debvez, comme vous dictes,
Vous congnoissent comme je vous congnois,
Quitte seriez des debtes que vous fistes
Le temps passé tant grandes que petites,
En leur paiant ung dixain toute fois
Tel que le vostre qui vault mieulx mille fois
Que l'argent deu par vous, en conscience;
Car estimer on peult l'argent en poix,
Mais on ne peult, et j'en donne ma voix,
Assez priser vostre belle science."

I do not claim for Margaret a high place among poets. Refinement of style and taste are her highest qualities. The following lines on the illness of her brother are in the best possible taste:

"Je regarde de tout costé,
Pour voir s'il n'arrive personne:
Priant la céleste bonté
Que la santé à mon roi donne:
Quand nul ne vois, l'œil j'abandonne
À pleurer, puis sur le papier
Un peu de ma douleur j'ordonne;
Voilà mon douloureux métier.

O qu'il sera le bien venu,
Celui qui, frappant à ma porte,
Dira—"Le roi est revenu
En sa santé très bonne et forte."
Alors sa sœur, plus mal que morte,
Courra baiser le messager
Qui telles nouvelles apporte,
Que son frère est hors de danger."

Brantôme, in his curious memoirs, gives some particulars about her. He says that she was a princess 'de très grand esprit, et fort habille;' that she was always learning; that her heart was wholly given to God; that, therefore, her device was the marigold, a flower which always turns to the sun; that though she was suspected of Lutheran tendencies, she never made any profession of Lutheranism, out of the great respect and affection which she had for the king, who hated it; therein, he says, resembling the great sultan, Soliman, who regarded the sectarians of Christendom as so many disturbers of the public peace. At the same time Francis assisted the Protestant princes of Germany against the

emperor. "Thus," says Brantôme, "ces grands roys se gouvernent comme il leur plaist." The Constable de Montmorency once ventured to tell the king that if he was going to extirpate heretics, he had better begin with the queen his sister. "Ne parlons point de celle là," said the king; "elle m' ayme trop. She will never believe anything but what I believe, nor take up any religion which would prejudice my state." As might be expected, the constable made little by his interference, as the story goes on to relate.

When Francis was in captivity in Spain, and ill, she went there, and knowing more about medicine than any of the doctors, she cured him. When he was ill again, she declared that not only would she kiss the man who brought news of his recovery, as her little poem quoted above says, but that she would receive him and entertain him so well that if there were no bed for him, he should have hers, and she would sleep on the hard floor. And the news of his death so greatly afflicted her that she never recovered from it. All the love she had in her nature she bestowed on her brother.

"Bref, c' estoit une princesse digne d'un grand empire. Outre tout cela, elle estoit très bonne, douce, gracieuse, charitable, grande, ausmonière, et ne desdaignant personne."

She was greatly afraid of dying, and when comforted by the prospect of heaven, would say, "All that is true, but we lie such a long time dead under the ground before we get there." She was born under what Brantôme considers a fortunate star, namely, under the tenth degree of Aquarius, when Saturn was separating from Venus by the fourth aspect.

Her brother Francis came into the world under the twenty-first degree of Gemini. Brantôme does not say which was the more fortunate.

She caught her death by looking at a comet "which appeared on the death of the Pope Paul III., though," says Brantôme, "perhaps it appeared for herself." Her physician saw her mouth twitch across, and instantly ordered her to bed. Unluckily she went there, was treated by him, and died in eight days.

Of Francis, Brantôme is equally garrulous. And first he says that he is surprised to have seen, in a book otherwise good, a character of Francis which says that he had great virtues and great vices also. "It astonished me much when I heard talk of great vices, as I had never heard from the great seigneurs and ladies of that time that he was so tainted." Thereupon he enumerates all his virtues, carefully excluding chastity.

The model upon which Francis tried to form himself was the ideal knight of the romances. To reverence ladies, to keep faith, to win battles, to be a gallant warrior and a successful lover, this was his aim and object through life, though, like most of us, he fell at times far short of his ideal. He was fond of pleasure, but fonder of honour. He never deserted a friend, or betrayed an enemy who trusted in him; he was cruel to Lutherans, because he saw in them the most dangerous foe to the chivalrous spirit, failure in obedience to authority. He himself obeyed the Pope as he would have his subjects obey himself. He submitted to the rules of chivalry, and was knighted by Bayard on the field of Marignan. He loved letters and arts, and recognized

the advantages of education; he founded the Collège Royal, to which he invited Erasmus. He was the most good-natured of men, witness his treatment of Marot, and his reception of the sharp sarcasm of the Duchess of Uzès after the execution of M. de Saint Blançay. The king addressed her as "Ma fille," upon which she burst into tears, and pretended the greatest terror and sorrow, to everybody's astonishment. "Hélas," she said, "le Roy me vient d'appeller à ceste heure par trois ou quatre fois sa fille. J'ay grand peur qu'il ne m'en fasse faire autant qu'à M. de Saint Blançay[1], qu'il appelloit tant *son père*. Que puis qu'il l'appelloit *son père*, et moy *sa fille*, c'est une mesme chose: de mesme m'en fera il autant." Upon which the king *se mit à rire*. In his youth, again, he had three great favourites, Montmorency, Brion-Chabet, and Montchenu. He asked them once what he should do for them when he became king. Montmorency said he should like to be Constable, Brionchabet would be Admiral of France, Montchenu chief Maître d'Hotel to the king. Years afterwards, when he was actually king, every one of them obtained what he had asked as a boy.

By writing verses, in which Clément Marot was his master, it must be owned that Francis did little to advance literature. His poetry never rises above mediocrity, and is not so good as his sister's. But he did what only kings can do; he founded chairs for professors, instituted the Royal College, established a Royal press, got round him the best men then in France, and, better than all, ordered that all

[1] M. de Blançay had just then been executed.

legal acts and documents should be henceforth written and published in French.

Here are one or two specimens of his verse. It will be seen that in style and language he closely imitates Marot.

"Cœur à mouvoir plus fort et échauffer
Qu'un dur rocher et qu'une froide glace,
De quoi te sert de mon mal triompher,
Et t'orgueillir de beauté qui tout passe:
Par vrai amour ton amour je pourchasse:
De quoi ne m'as tant soit peu satisfait:
Grace attendue est une ingrate grace:
Et bien n'est bien, s'il n'est promptement fait."

EPITAPH ON LAURA.

"Cy gist en peu de terre ung qui la rempliſſoit
Par louange et bon bruict dont tout autre il passoit:
Ainsi elle se paist du meilleur qu'en elle eut,
Comprenant tout son bien dedans ce petit fust.[1]

O bien heureuse terre estant en toy semé
Un fruict après lequel nul autre est estimé!
Doncques en toy est mis pour ta félicité
Ce qui à chacun rend deuil et adversité.
Parquoy vous qui cherchez chose parfaicte à veoir,
Arrestez-cy vos pas sans plus de peine avoir."

It is right to add that the best pieces found among the poems of Francis are attributed to Mellin de Saint Gelais or to Clément Marot. This may be so, but the great honour remains to Francis of having been the first king of France who encouraged and protected learning in an intelligent spirit. The evils of his reign are not wholly attributable to him; only, with his political errors and licentious life we have nothing here to do. He died in 1547; Margaret in

[1] fust (Lat. fustis) wood. palisade.

1549, surviving her brother only two years. After his death she says—

"Je n'ay plus ny père, ny mère,
Ny sœur, ny frère,
Sinon Dieu seul, auquel j'espère,
Qui sus le Ciel et terre impère
Là hault, là bas,
Tout par compas....
Je suis amoureux, non en Ville
Ny en Maison, ny en Chasteau;
Ce n'est ny de femme, ni de fille
Mais du seul bon, puissant et beau:
C'est mon Sauveur,
Qui est vainqueur
Du péché, mal, peine et douleur,
Et a ravi à soy mon cœur."

It is difficult to understand how a woman who could write these lines could be engaged at the same time in writing the Heptameron. It was, however, a time of contradictions. We must remember that Francis was burning the Lutherans for the glory of God, while he was leading, apparently unrebuked by the Church, a life of unrestrained licence; that orthodoxy and piety of expression were of such great value that morality and decency were lost sight of; that even the great Theodore Beza himself wrote verses worse than any in Martial; and that, though the ripeness of French corruption had not yet arrived, there were sure signs that it was advancing, and the Italian woman was already in Paris, married to the Dauphin, patiently abiding her time, till the reign of Diane de Poictiers should come to an end, and she alone be mistress and ruler of France. Morally speaking, the times were out of joint. If we find

Margaret in advance of the time, leading a life of purity and self-denial in a period of unrestrained licence, she needs little apology for a book which, although as coarse as well may be in parts, was chiefly coarse to serve her own purposes, and help the downfall of the monks.

NOTE.—A full account of the court of Margaret would lead me too far from my present purpose. It belongs particularly to the history of that curiously interesting religious spirit which seems to have run through France from the days of Guillaume de Lorris to those of Voltaire. Its chief literary manifestations at this time were the works of Rabelais, the tales of Margaret, and the Cymbalum Mundi of Bonaventure Des Periers, the most remarkable book, in many respects, of the time. Bonaventure was also a poet in a very small way. He committed suicide when Margaret was unable or unwilling to help him any longer. His work, an imitation of Lucian's Dialogues, is worthy of most careful study, and gives a most curious insight into the thought of the age.

CHAPTER XII.

LA FAMILLE MAROT.

"Par sus tout suis congneu des neuf Muses,
Et d'Apollo, Mercure et touts leurs filz,
En vraye amour et science confictz."

THERE was living in the fifteenth century, in the village of Matthieu, distant some five or six miles from the town of Caen, in Normandy, a family of peasants or small proprietors, known by the name of Marot, Mares, or Des Marets. They may possibly be living there still for aught I know, but they have ceased to distinguish themselves. One of their number, Jehan, is found in 1471 at the town of Cahors. Why he went there, and why he stayed there, is not certain. It has been suggested that his first visit was caused by the celebrity of the University of Cahors, which at that time boasted some four thousand scholars. Thither, it is supposed, he repaired for the sake of study. If that were the case, the worthy Jehan did little good at his books, for in after-life he constantly complains of his want of learning. According to the wont of students, he fell

in love with a young lady of the place. Unlike our modern undergraduates, however, he married her; and in obedience to the law of the town, as a stranger, adopted her name, and was known in Cahors as Jehan Marot-Rosières. In 1480 she was dead, her children were under the tutelage of some guardian, and he was away—no one at the present time knows where; nor does it matter. Probably he was engaged in some clerical work. However, in 1494 he returned, married again, and apparently stayed at Cahors for some ten years; in what capacity, is unknown.

His son Clément was born about 1497. The place was fit for the birthplace and younger days of a poet. "The traveller," says his latest editor, "rencontre d'abord un large plateau dont la surface dentelée semble s'être crevée au milieu d'un bouilloument immense pour livrer passage à mille mamelons... On croiroit voir les flots d'une mer houleuse subitement immobilisiés. Puis le plateau s'affaisse et descend dans une vallée tortueuse où ce fleuve dont nous parle notre poëte, ce fleuve aux eaux sombres court furieusement au milieu des rochers.....

"Arrivé à peu près au milieu de son parcours le fleuve se detourne brusquement vers le sud, puis non moins brusquement remonte. Il decrit ainsi un angle à la pointe duquel est bâtie une ville. Celle ci, adossée à des montagnes verdoyantes, s'arrondit sur la rive droite de la rivière qui 'va léchant ses bords,' et forme un arc de cercle dont le Lot dessina la corde." Terrace upon terrace, the mountains rise behind the town, bristling with walls built so as to make them look like a gigantic staircase, and planted with vines, while in front the peaks are piled one over the

other, and the rocks close in upon the river, so as hardly to leave it room for escape.

This place, picturesque in its prosperity, must have been even more picturesque in its ruin when Marot was born. For, although the tower was uninjured by the wars that had passed round it, the country of Quercy was utterly devastated and wasted. Ruins of forts and castles on every hill; churches where wolves littered behind the altar and in the pulpit; vineyards wantonly destroyed; farms unstocked; and woods growing over green fields. The sword and the flames had passed twice over this unhappy province; first in the crusade of the Albigeois; afterwards in the great war against the English; and Quercy was depopulated. We may remember, when we have to speak of Clément's so-called Protestant tendencies, that he had been brought up amid scenes which recalled perpetually to his mind the darkest side of orthodoxy; and if he did not leave the Church till he was forced, his memory was too full of her tender mercies for him to love her.

About the year 1507 Clément was taken by his father to Paris. He says:

"N'ayant dix ans, en France fuz meiné."

Jean Marot accompanied the King on his campaign to Genoa. He wrote a delectable account of this on his return, which he dedicated to the Queen, Anne of Brittany, styling himself "écrivain et poëte de la très magnanime royne de France." The worthy poet, on the death of Anne, was lucky enough to secure the post of valet-de-

chambre (an office before that time only held by gentlemen in a royal household) to Francis the First. In the dull period of Louis the Twelfth he passed for a great poet, and was indeed, for the time, a versifier of some merit. He published, besides this account of his journey, a collection of rondeaux, ballads, and other verses in the regular taste of the day.

What that taste was, we have seen in the works of Crétin and others of that stamp. There was no life about the poetry of the reign of Louis XII. He and his queen were sober, grave, and steady persons, inclined to the solid virtues, and highly esteeming those bards who made virtue the burden of their song. The poets of his court were old men who could remember the days of Charles of Orleans, and who prosed musically but monotonously over their dreary allegories and rondeaux. But without his court, and under his very eyes, was growing up that spirit of joyous licence which was going to do such great things for the literature of his successor. Louis himself refused to interfere with the Basochiens and Enfants sans souci, and allowed them to satirize his court as much as they pleased, saying, in the true spirit of a gentleman, "Let these young fellows play what they like, and set forth all the abuses they may see in my court, since the confessors and the rest of the prudent ones hold their tongues about them; provided only that nothing be said of my wife, for the honour of our ladies must be guarded." While old Jehan Marot rhymed and exhorted for the Queen's delectation, young Clément was let loose on Paris, allowed to do pretty much what he pleased, and to learn what he liked. While he is playing

truant, when he is supposed to be attending lectures, let us see a few of Maître Jehan's verses.

They illustrate exactly the moral tendency of Louis's court. He teaches the ladies how to win respect in a series of rondeaux, twenty-three in number. Here is one:

"Qui a ces deux, chasteté et beauté,
Vanter se peut qu'en toute loyauté,
Toute autre dame elle surmonte et passe
Vu que beauté oncque jour ne fut lasse
De faire guerre à dame chasteté.

Mais quand ensemble elles font unité,
C'est don divin joint à l'humanité,
Qui rend la dame accomplie de grace,
Qui a ces deux.

Mieux vaut laideur gardant honnesteté,
Que beauté folle en chassant netteté;
Toi donc qui as gent corps et belle face,
Prens chastéte, tu seras l'outre passé:
Car Meung nous dit que peu en a été
Qui a ces deux."

No advice could be more excellent than this.

Jehan Marot's fame rested chiefly on his Voyage en Gênes. Here he describes with great minuteness all the events of that expedition. Mars, Bellona, Peace, Neptune, and other distinguished personages are represented as taking part in it. His style is far behind that of his son, and his greatest merit appears to be that he encouraged Clément in his earliest poetical efforts. In Clément's letter to the king, asking for his late father's place, he puts these prudent words into the mouth of the dying man:

"Si est il mort ainsi qu'il demandoit.
Et me souvient, quand la mort attendoit,

Qu'il me disoit, en me tenant la dextre.
"Filz, puisque Dieu t'a faict la grace d'estre
Vray héritier de mon peu de sçavoir,
Quiers en le bien qu'on m'en a faict avoir.
Tu congnois comme user en est décent:
C'est ung sçavoir tant pur et innocent
Qu'on n'en sçauroit à créature nuyre.
Par preschements le peuple on peult séduire,
Par marchander, tromper on le peult bien,
Par playderie, on peult menger son bien,
Par médicine, on peult l'homme tuer:
Mais ton bel art ne peut telz coups ruer,
Ains en sçauras meilleur ouvrage tistre." (tisser)

* * * * *

After which the old man recommends him to go to the king and ask for his favour; a piece of advice which Clément followed to the letter, and of which he was mindful to his last day.

The poems of Jehan Marot, by themselves, present no special features of interest. We have seen their brethren, for a family likeness runs through all, in the verses of Meschinot, Crétin, and others. Probably the example of the father was the cause of the son's writing poetry at all. For all that Jehan Marot possessed in the world, he owed to his verses, and with such substantial proofs of the worth of success before his eyes, Clément was doubtless stimulated to try his own fortune, and to rely on the pen rather than the sword or the robe.

We get almost all the known details of Clément's life from his poetry. If any misfortune happened to him, he immediately wrote a letter to some one, generally the king, describing his calamities in rhyme, and asking to be helped out of them. So that what we know of his life is principally

the history of these misfortunes. The rest is all tradition. Let us then gather the story of his life from his writings alone. At present we have left him at college. This is what he says himself of his youth. (Eclogue au roy soubs les noms de Pan et Robin.)

"Sur* le printemps de ma jeunesse folle,
Je ressembloys l'arondelle qui vole,
Puis çà, puis là: l'aage me conduisoit
Sans paour, ne soing, où le cueur me disoit,
En la forest, sans la craincte des loups,
Je m'en allois souvent cueillir le houx,
Pour faire gluz à prendre oyseaulx ramaiges,[1]
Tous différens de chantz et de plumaiges:
Ou me souloys,[2] pour les prendre, entremettre
A faire brics,[3] ou caiges pour les mettre.
Ou transnouoys[4] les rivières profondes,
Ou r'enforçoys[5] sur le genoil les fondes,[6]
Puis d'en tirer droict et loing j'apprenois
Pour chasser loups et abbatre des noix.

O quantes foys aux arbres grimpé j'ay
Pour desnicher ou la pie, ou la geay,
Ou pour gecter des fruictz jà meurs et beaulx
A mes compaings, qui tendoient leurs chappeaulx.
* * * * *

Desjà pourtant je faisoys quelques nottes
De chant rusticque, et dessoubz les ormeaulx
Quasi enfant sonnoys des chalumeaulx.
Si ne sçauroys bien dire ne penser
Qui m'enseigna si tost d'y commencer,
Ou la nature aux Muses inclinée,
Ou ma fortune, en cela destinée

* See note at end of chapter.

[1] wild. [2] was accustomed. [3] traps.
[4] swam across. [5] tied up. [6] slings.

À te servir. Si ce ne fust l'ung d'eulx
Je suis certain que ce furent touts deux.
Ce que voyant le bon Janot mon père,
Voulut gaiger à Jaquet son compère
Contre un veau gras deux aignelletz bessons[1]
Que quelque jour je ferois des chansons
À ta louenge, O Pan Dieu tressacré!
Voyre chansons qui te viendroient à gré.
Et me souvient que bien souvent aux festes
En regardant de loing paistre nos bestes,
Il me souloit[2] une leçon donner,
Pour doulcement la musette entonner
Ou à dicter quelque chanson ruralle
Pour la chanter en mode pastoralle."

The whole of this eclogue is remarkably pretty. He goes on to tell us how, as manhood came on, he learned to know the four parts of the world; the winds and their seasons by the flight of the birds; the best and most dangerous pasturage; the diseases of animals.

"Mais par sus toutes choses
D'autant que plus plaisent les blanches roses
Que l'aubespin, plus j'aymois à sonner
De la musette et la feis résonner
En tous les tous et chants de bucoliques
En chantz piteux, en chantz melancholiques."

He sang so well, he says, that the Oreades, Fauns, Sylvans, Satyrs, and Dryads shed tears on hearing him; he sang of Margot, *bergère qui tant vault;* and the death of poor Loysette, who, now in Heaven, takes delight in seeing her sheep still *icy bas.* Another time he challenged all comers to play against him on the pipe for the love

[1] jumeaux. [2] was wont.

of his *amye;* but to this day no one can say who won the prize, himself or Mellin (De Saint Gelais), the other shepherd. He ends in the most approved style:

"Sus, mes brebis, trouppeau petit et maigre,
Autour de moy saultez de cueur allaigre,
Car desjà Pan, de sa verte maison,
M'a faict ce bien d'ouyr mon oraison."

Speaking in another place of his youth, he says that he was born at Cahors, in Quercy:

"Une matinée
N'ayant dix ans en France fut meiné:
Là où depuis me suis tant pourmeiné
Que j'oubliay ma langue maternelle,
Et grossement aprins la paternelle,
Langue françoyse ès grands courts estimée,
Laquelle en fin quelque peu s'est limée,
Suyvant le roy François premier du nom,
Dont le sçavoir excéde le renom."

Before we quit his early youth, read this ballad, "De soy mesme du temps qu'il apprenoit à escrire au Palais à Paris."

"Musiciens à la voix argentine,
Doresnavant, comme un homme esperdu,
Je chanteray plus hault qu'une buccine;
Hélas! si j'ay mon joly temps perdu.
Puis que je n'ay ce que j'ay pretendu,
C'est ma chanson, pour moy elle est bien deue.
Or je voys[1] voir si la guerre est perdue,
Ou s'elle picque ainsi qu'ung hérisson.
Adieu vous dy, mon maistre Jehan Grisson,
Adieu Palais, et la porte Barbette,
Où j'ay chanté mainte belle chanson
Pour le plaisir d'une jeune fillette.

[1] voys = vais.

Celle qui c'est en jeunesse, est bien fine,
Où j'ai esté assez mal entendu;
Mais si pour elle encores je chemine,[1]
Parmy les piedz je puisse estre pendu!
C'est trop chanté, sifflé, et attendu
Devant sa porte, en passant par la rue.
Et mieulx vauldroit tirer à la charrue
Qu'avoir tel peine, ou servir un masson.
Bref, si jamais j'en tremble de frisson,
Je suis content qu'on m'appelle *Caillette*:[2]
C'est trop souffert de peine et marrison[3]
Pour le plaisir d'une jeune fillette.

Je quicte tout, je donne, je résigne
Le don d'aymer, qui est si cher vendu.
Je ne dy pas que je me détermine
De vaincre Amour; cela m'est deffendu,
Car nul ne peult contre son arc tendu.
Mais de souffrir chose si mal congrue,
Par mon serment, je ne suis plus si grue.
On m'a aprins tout par cueur ma leçon.
Je crains le guet, c'est un maulvais garçon
Et puis de nuict trouvez une charrette;
Vous vous cassez le nez comme ung glaçon
Pour le plaisir d'une jeune fillette."

We may compare the last four lines with the complaint of the lover in the Arrêts d'Amour.

Bidding farewell to the young Basochiens, the fair Barthélemy, and that ravishing demoiselle, with green gloves, the blue robe, and a corset,

"D'ung fin bleu, lassé d'un lasset
Jaulne qu'elle avoit faict exprès,"

Clément entered the service of M. de Neuville, Seigneur

[1] go slowly. [2] Caillette, name of a buffoon of the time.
[3] marrison, suffering.

de Villeroy, and owner of the Tuilleries, which he afterwards ceded to the king, as one of his pages. The young poet could hardly have found a better patron. M. de Neuville was secretary of finance in 1507; he became in high favour with the young king; was a man of great intelligence, very wealthy, and of good family. Probably it was through his offices that Clément's first serious efforts, Le Jugement de Minos, Le Temple de Cupido, and La Queste de Ferme Amour, were introduced to the notice of the king. His father's office may, however, have helped him, for Jehan Marot, on the death of Anne of Brittany, in 1514, and of Louis XII., in 1515, had found favour in the eyes of Francis the First.

On the expiration of the term of his service as page, which would be about the age of eighteen, he tried to obtain some post at court, but we may conclude with ill success, for it is not till 1519, perhaps not till 1524, that he was recommended by Francis to the protection of his sister Margaret of Valois. By her kindness he was appointed valet-de-chambre at her court, and, for a time at least, found a harbour of refuge from the tempestuous sea of misfortune, of which he complains:

"C'est le seul bien que j'ay acquis en France
Depuis vingt ans en labeur et souffrance,
Fortune m'a entre mille malheurs
Donné ce bien des mondaines valeurs.
Que dy-je, las! O parolle soudaine:
C'est don de Dieu, non point valeur mondaine.
Rien n'ay acquis des valeurs de ce monde
Qu'une maistresse, en qui gist et abonde
Plus de sçavoir, parlant et escrivant,
Qu'en aultre femme en ce monde vivant.

C'est du franc lys l'yssue Marguèrite,
Grande sur terre, envers le ciel petite.
C'est la princesse à l'esprit inspiré,
Au cueur esleu qui de Dieu est tiré
Mieulx (et m'en croy,) que le festu de l'ambre:
Et d'elle suis l'humble valet de chambre."

He did not, however, get the appointment without asking for it.

"Princesse au cœur noble et rassis,
La fortune que j'ay suivie,
Par force m'a souvent assis
Au froit giron de triste vie:
De m'y seoir encor me convie,
Mais je respondz, comme fasché.
D'estre assis je n'ay plus d'envie;
Il n'est que d'estre bien couché."

Here he continues for some years, and appears to have acquired steady esteem of his benefactress, who protected him as much and as long as she was able. There have not been wanting biographers of Clément who find in the relation between Margaret of Valois and the poet something warmer than mere friendship on the one hand, respect and gratitude on the other. This is, however, mere guesswork, and, which is worse, the guesswork of minds who can only see evil, where others see nothing but good. As has been already pointed out, Love, in those days, was still a sentiment; it had preserved from the old times that dignity which belongs to honour and self-respect; a dignity which lasted in England long after the dissoluteness of Henry the Second and the introduction of Italian manners had drawn it out of France. We see it in the passionate admiration of her courtiers for Elizabeth,—in the genuine

love and respect of Sir Walter Raleigh for a queen twenty years his senior. It is one of the losses of the age that men no longer attach themselves to women by bonds that have nothing to do with passion or age; and that the friendship of Marot and Margaret, Elizabeth and Raleigh, can call forth slander and obloquy.

Again, in those days a mistress was almost necessary for a man. To quote at second hand from our editor, M. d' Héricault: "L' on avoit en ce temps-là une coustume, qu' il estoit messéant aux jeunes gens de bonne maison s' ils n' avoient une maistresse laquelle ne se choisissoit par eux et moins par leur affection, mais ou elles estoient données par quelques parents ou supérieurs, ou elles mesmes choisissoient ceux de qui elles vouloient estre servies à la cour..... J' estois soigneux de complaire à ma maistresse et de la faire servir de mes pages et de mes laquais. Elle se rendit très soigneuse de moy, me reprenant de tout en ce qu' il luy sembloit que je faisois de mal séant, d' indiscret ou d' incivil. Nulle autre personne me m' a tant aidé à introduire dans le monde et à me faire prendre l' air de la cour."

Nothing could better explain the reason of this custom. Young men were civilized by it, they learned the best manners of the time, they were kept in the society of ladies, and they contracted a distaste for things low and vulgar. Of course it had its dangers, and Platonic love is apt to degenerate into a sentiment quite common and human. Until, however, proof is found to the contrary, we have no right to suspect anything but that chivalrous sentiment, a mixture of respect and friendship, which united the young

chevalier to his maistresse. Clément, about this time, says that, for his part, his white livery—that of the Princess—was a token that he had no mistress whose colours he could wear.

"De mes couleurs, ma nouvelle alliée,
Estre ne peult vostre jambe liée,
Car couleurs n'ay et n'en porteraye mye
Jusques à tant que j'auray une amye
Qui me taindra le seul blanc que je porte
En ses couleurs de quelcque belle sorte."

This unhappy solitude of his soul could not, however, have lasted long, for in 1524 he went with the king to Italy, and, after the battle of Pavia, writes to his mistress. This *élégie* is written in the allegorical style which he afterwards abandoned. *Doubte* and *Ferme Amour* dissuade and persuade him respectively to write to her. In the end Amour conquers.

"L'ung dict, 'Escry.' L'autre dict, 'N'escry point.'"

Which reminds one of the advice given to John Bunyan by his friends:

"Some said, 'John, print it': others said, 'Not so'.
Some said, 'It might do good': others said, 'No.'"

At the battle of Pavia he was wounded and taken prisoner, but was allowed to go away, the enemy not caring for such small prey as simple gentlemen and soldiers.

"Là fut percé tout oultre rudement
Le bras de cil qui t'ayme loyaulment:
Non pas le bras dont il a de coustume
De manier, ou la lance, ou la plume:
Amour encor le te garde et réserve,
Et par escripts veult que de loing te serve.

Finablement avec le Roy, mon maistre,
Delà les monts prisonnier se veit estre
Mon triste corps, navré en grand souffrance.
Quant est du cueur, long temps y a qu'en France
Ton prisonnier il est sans mesprison.
Or est le corps sorty hors de prison:
Mais quant du cueur, puis que tu es la garde
De sa prison, d'en sortir il n'a garde."

* * * * *

"The enemy," he says, "will sing, *d'un stile hault*, their triumphs and victories, but we shall have nothing to do but lament our misfortunes."

"Les dire, hélas! Il vault mieulx les taire!
Il vault trop mieulx en ung lieu solitaire,
En champs, ou boys pleins d'arbres et de fleurs,
Aller dicter les plaisirs ou les pleurs
Que l'on reçoit de sa dame chérie:
Puis pour oster hors du cueur fascherie,
Voller en plaine et chasser en forestz:
Descoupler chiens, tendre toilles et rhetz;
Aulcunefois, après les longues courses,
Se venir seoir près des ruisseaux et sources,
Et s'endormir au son de l'eaue qui bruyt,
On escouter la musique et le bruict
Des oyselletz, painctz de couleurs estranges,
Comme mallars, merles, maulviz, mésanges,
Pinsons, pivers, passes, et passerons.
En ce plaisir le temps nous passerons."

The reader will be reminded of the pastoral dreams of Don Quixote, and the picture he draws, after his misfortunes, of the life that Sancho and he yet may lead.

Alas! on his return to France all his hopes are dashed to the ground. She is changed; she smiles on him no longer.

"Qu'ay-je mesfaict, dictes, ma chére amye?
Vostre amour semble estre toute endormie;
Je n'ay de vous plus lettres, ne langage;
Je n'ay de vous ung seul petit message,
Plus ne vous voy aux lieux accoustumez.
Sont là estainctz vos désirs allumez,
Qui avec moy d'un mesme feu ardoient?
Où sont les yeux lesquelz me regardoient
Souvent en ris, souvent avecques larmes?
Où sont les motz qui tant m'ont faict d'alarmes?
Où est la bouche aussi qui m'appaisoit
Quand tant de fois et si bien me baisoit?
Où est le cueur que irrévocablement
M'avez donné? où est semblablement
La blanche main, qui bien fort m'arrestoit
Quand de partier de vous besoing m'estoit?"

In a short piece written about this time he describes his habits:

"Tous deux aymons gens plein d'honnesteté,
Tous deux aymons honneur et netteté,
Tous deux aymons à d'aulcun ne mesdire,
Tous deux aymons ung meilleur propos dire;
Tous deux aymons à nous trouver en lieux
Où ne sont point gens mélancolieux:
Tous deux aymons la musique chanter,
Tous deux aymons les livres fréquenter."

And in the next poem he tells us what he has read:

"Certainement, dame treshonnorée,
J'ay leu des saintz la Légende Dorée,
J'ay leu Alain, le tresnoble orateur,
Et Lancelot, le tresplaisant menteur,
J'ay leu aussi le Romant de la Rose
Maistre en amours, et Valère et Orose
Comptans les faictz des antiques Romains:
Brief, en mon temps, j'ay leu des livres maintz."

Who was his mistress? Diane de Poictiers, has been answered. But, as is easily shewn, there is no other proof of this except the fact that her name, whoever she was, was Diane. Now probably there was more than one Diane in Paris. He calls her Luna, and speaks of her as having caused his first imprisonment. Now Diane de Poictiers was not a widow till 1531, when she became the mistress of the Dauphin, afterwards Henry the Second; and there is no ground for supposing her unfaithful to him.

The hostility of reformers and orthodox was becoming daily more bitter. In the court of Margaret, as has been already stated, was a spirit of licence in thought and speech which did much for the cause of religious reform. Among the most prominent of the free speakers was doubtless Marot. He had no learning to attack the priests with, but he had the more dangerous gifts of wit, recklessness, and contempt. There is reason to believe that his tongue was his worst enemy, and that, had he kept quiet, he would have escaped persecutions on account of his opinions. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether he really had any opinions at all. In his reading of the old romances he found the Church the constant object of satire and abuse; the state of ecclesiastical matters in his own time was shameful, with a shame patent to the eyes of all; his friends, the Basochiens, were ever delighted to make the priests the butt of their sarcasms; and at the court of his protectress his attacks would be welcomed as much for their wit as for their truth. Moreover, he was vain, eager for reputation, and careless of making enemies. He was arrested and put in prison. The moment for his arrest was well chosen;

his friend the king was a prisoner in Spain, and his friend Margaret was away from Paris, gone to use her entreaties with Charles, and to tend her sick brother. One doctor Bouchar charged him with heresy, and he was seized and carried off to the Chastelet.

Some friend helped him out of this strait, which was, indeed, a very serious one. The chance of being burnt, in itself very considerable—for men had already, in France as well as in England, found out this method of reconciliation—was added to the pains of prison, bread and water, and opportunities for solitary reflection. The Bishop of Chartres, Louis Guillard, either instigated by others who thought it expedient in helping an alleged heretic to keep in the background, or out of his own generosity, interfered, and claimed Clément Marot as his own prisoner; by what right, does not clearly appear. He was taken to the Bishop's Palace, kept for some time in a sort of honourable confinement, and then—I suppose when people had something else to talk about—let go without any trial or investigation.

He sends the following letter of expostulation to Doctor Bouchar:—

"Donne responce à mon présent affaire,
Docte docteur. Qui t'a induict à faire
Emprisonner, depuis six jours en ça,
Ung tien amy qui onc ne t'offensa,
Et vouloir mettre en luy crainte et terreur
D'aigre justice, en disant que l'erreur
Tiens de Luther? Point ne suis Luthériste
Ne Zuinglien et moins Anabaptiste:
Je suis de Dieu par son filz Jesu Christ.
Je suys celluy qui ay faict maint escript

Dont un seul vers on n'en sçauroit extraire,
Qui à la loy divine soit contraire.
Je suis celluy qui prends plaisir et peine
À louer Christ et sa mère tant pleine
De grace infuse: et pour bien l'esprouver
On le pouvra par mes escriptz trouver."

Decidedly, Marot was not of the stuff of which martyrs were made. The stake had no attractions for him. He seems to have attributed his imprisonment "à celle qui fut s'amie."[1]

"Ung jour rescrivy à m'amye
Son inconstance seulement,
Mais elle ne fut endormie
À me le rendre chauldement:
Car dès l'heure tint parlement
À je ne sçay quel papelard,
Et luy a dict tout bellement;
'Prenez-le, il a mangé le lard.'

Lors six pendars ne faillent mye
À me surprendre finement,
Et de jour pour plus d'infamie,
Feirent mon emprisonnement.
Ils vindrent à mon logement;
Lors se va dire ung gros paillard.
'Par la mortbien, voilà Clément:
Prenez-le, il a mangé le lard.'"

This event was in 1526. In 1527 he brought out an edition of his favourite work, the Roman de la Rose. In 1528, the marriage, which proved subsequently of great

[1] Remembering that his imprisonment was in 1526; that Francis was in Spain; that Diane de Poictiers was not yet a widow; that she had as yet no court influence, unless a certain story be true, and that even then it could only have been personal influence with the king—I do not see how his amye could have been Diane.

advantage to him, of Renée of France to the Duke of Ferrara was solemnized. The following year a little misfortune fell upon him which he turned to account in his usual way. He was ill, and his servant robbed him of nearly all his money. He narrates the story in a most charming letter to the king.

"J'avois ung jour un valet de Gascongne,
Gourmant, yvroigne, et asseuré menteur,
Pipeur,[1] larron, jureur, blasphémateur,
Sentant la hart[2] de cent pas à la ronde,
Au demeurant le meilleur filz du monde.
Prisé, loué, fut estimé des filles,
Par les bourdeaux, et beau joueur de quilles.
Ce vénérable hillot[3] fut adverty
De quelque argent que m'aviez départy,
Et que ma bourse avoit grosse apostume;
Si se leva plustost que de coustume
Et me va prendre en tapinoys[4] icelle,
Puis la vous mist tresbien soubz son esselle
Argent et tout, cela se doit entendre,
Et ne croy point que ce fust pour la rendre,
Car oncques puis n'en ay ouy parler.
Brief, le villain ne s'en voulut aller
Pour si petit; mais cueur il me happe
Saye[5] et bonnet, chausses, pour poinct et cappe:
De mes habitz, en effect, il pilla
Tous les plus beaux; et puis s'en habilla
Si justement qu'à le veoir ainsi estre
Vous l'eussiez prins en plein jour pour son maistre.
Finablement, de ma chambre il s'en va
Droict à l'estable, où deux chevaulx trouva:
Laisse le pire et sur le meilleur monte:
Picque et s'en va. Pour abreger le compte,

[1] given to trickery. [2] cord used for hanging.
[3] servant, slave, helot. [4] secretly. [5] short coat.

Soiez certain qu'au partir dudict lieu
N'oublya rien, fors à me dire adieu."

He, meantime, being sound asleep. He wakes up to find his purse, clothes, and money gone.

"Mais de l'argent que vous m'aviez donné,
Je ne fuz point de le perdre estonné:
Car vostre argent, tresdébonnaire prince,
Sans point de faulte, est le subject à la pince."[1]

He goes on to explain that another misfortune has fallen upon him. He has been for nine months very ill; he has spent the little money this scoundrel Gascon left him in doctors, syrops, and medicines. But as for the physicians, they

"Tout consulté, ont remis au printemps
Ma guarison. Mais, à ce que j'entends,
Si je ne puis au printemps arriver,
Je suis taillé de mourir en yver,
Et en danger, si en yver je meurs,
De ne veoir pas les premiers raisins meurs."

Under these melancholy circumstances he begs to borrow a little money of the king, which he is quite certain to repay.

For the date of repayment,

"Je vous feray une belle cédulle
A vous payer (sans usures, il s'entend),
Quand on verra tout le monde content.
Ou si voulez, à payer ce sera,
Quand vostre loz et renom cessera."

If his own name to this valuable bond is not sufficient, he will get the two princes of Lorraine, the Cardinal of

[1] An instrument used in coining.

Lorraine, and the Duke of Guise, to go surety for him. We may be quite sure that the débonnair king sent him some money.

Somewhere about this time he gets a second imprisonment for attempting a rescue from the officers of Justice. As usual, he writes to the king for assistance out of this scrape. "King of the French, full of all sorts of goodness, it is now fifteen days, for I have counted them all, and after tomorrow there will be sixteen, that I was made a confrère of the diocese of Saint Marry,[1] in the church of Saint Pris. Now I will tell you how I was taken, and very sorry I am to have to say it:

"Trois grands pendars vindrent, a l'estourdie,
En ce palais, me dire en désarroy:
'Nous vous faisons prisonnier par le Roy.'
Incontinent, qui fut bien estonné,
Ce fut Marot, plus que s'il eust tonné.
Puis m'ont montré ung parchemin escript
Où il n'avoit seul mot de Jesu Christ:
Il ne parloit tout que de playderie,
De conseilliers et d'emprisonnerie.
'Vous souvient-il, se me dirent ilz lors,
Que vous estiez l'autre jour là dehors,
Qu'on recourut ung certain prisonnier
Entre nos mains?' Et moy de le nyer:
Car soyez seur, si j'eusse dict ouy,
Que le plus sourd d'entre eulx m'eust bien ouy:
Et d'aultre part j'eusse publiquement
Esté menteur: car pourquoy et comment
Eussé je peu ung autre recourir,
Quand je n'ay sceu moy mesmes secourir?"

* * * * * *

[1] Saint Marry is Saint Merry. marry means sad, melancholy.

Having nothing to say for himself, these two *paillards* carry him off, each holding an arm, as if he was a bride, he says, only just a little more roughly:

"Mais pour venir au poinct de ma sortie,
Tant doulcement j'ay chanté ma partie
Que nous avons bien accordé ensemble,
Si que n'ay plus affaire, ce me semble,
Si non à vous. La partie est bien forte
Mais le droit poinct où je me reconforte,
Vous n'entendez procés non plus que moy;
Ne plaidons pas, ce n'est que tout esmoy.
Je vous en croy, si je vous ai mesfaict.
Encor, posé le cas que l'eusse faict,
Au pis aller n'escherroit qu'une amende.
Prenez le cas que vous me la donnez:
Et si plaideurs furent onc estonnez
Mieux que ceulx cy, je veulx qu'on me délivre
Et que soubdain en ma place on les livre.

* * * * *

Très humblement requerrant vostre grace
De pardonner à ma trop grand audace
D'avoir empris ce sot escript vous faire:
Et m'excusez, si, pour le mien affaire,
Je ne suis point vers vous allé parler:
Je n'ay pas eu le loysir d'y aller."

The mixture of familiarity and of respect in this letter shews that Clément was an excellent courtier to a most good-natured and débonnair king. It is almost needless to say that Francis gave orders directly to let him go.

In 1530, or thereabouts, he marries. As we gather from his verses, he had afterwards some family, but it is not known how many. Nor does he ever speak of his wife. Perhaps she was a native of Lyons, for Clément went there

at this time and became a member of the Société Angélique, a sort of provincial literary circle.

In 1532 he published his "Adolescence Clémentine," a collection of all his poems. In 1533 he edited a new edition of François Villon, a great favourite of his. Three or four years passed over tranquilly, so far as we know. But greater misfortunes were at hand. On the night of October 18th, 1534, an outrage was perpetrated at Paris which excited as much indignation and horror as the mutilation of the Hermæ did at Athens; placards were everywhere posted up filled with the most violent and the most blasphemous abuse of the Holy Eucharist. When one remembers that the most violent French reformers never went so far as the Germans; that the body of French people, however much they grumbled at abuses, detested Luther and his followers; and that the professed wits, the young clerks of the Châtelet and the students, repudiated the doctrines of the Reformers while they railed at scandals —it must be owned that the following words were likely to produce the gravest indignation: "Vostre Christ se laisse manger aux bestes et à vous pareillement, qui estes pire que des bestes en vos badinages lesquels vous faites à l'entour de vostre Dieu de paste, du quel vous jouez comme un chat d'un souris." As for the Catholics, the placards declared that they were, one and all, heretics and blasphemers; and that there were not enough faggots and fire in the world to burn them as they deserved. We who have been brought up in a holy horror of Catholic intolerance, would do well to bear in mind that toleration on either side, as yet, was not; and that the Lutherans

were quite ready, should they get the upper hand, to take their turn at piling the fire round their adversaries.

There was, indeed, a great commotion. The King, who had been at one time hesitating between the example of Henry and his own allegiance to the Pope, hesitated no longer. They had a grand procession, with Bishops, Archbishops, and King. A heretic was roasted at a slow fire; and Francis declared that even if his own children were infected with heresy, he would sacrifice them; and if it were his own right hand, he would cut it off. This declaration greatly pleased and comforted the souls of the faithful; and it was followed up by the summoning of upwards of sixty-three persons, who had fled from Paris, to answer the charge of heresy.[1] Among these was Clément; whether through the kind offices of Doctor Bouchar, anxious for the welfare of his soul, or the revenge of "celle qui fut s'amye," does not sufficiently appear. Most luckily for himself, he was at Blois, and being warned by a postillion, had time to escape. The first place he went to was naturally the court of his friend Margaret, now Queen of Navarre. But Béarn was no longer a place of safety for an accused Lutheran; the time of satire, scandal, and free speech was over; the satirists and learned doctors were scattered; and Margaret had quite enough to do to look after herself, particularly after the determined speech of her brother. Clément went to Italy, nearly getting caught on the way, and wrote to the Duchess of Ferrara. Renée, whose leanings to Protestantism were more than suspected,

[1] See note at end of chapter.

received him like a second Ovid. At her little court, at least, there was no burning of heretics; and, for a time at least, open shelter for them. From Ferrara Clément wrote his letter *du Coq en l'Asne*, which I have not space to quote from. He wrote also a letter to the king. Here he says, that although he does not consider himself an offender against the law, yet there are so many corruptible judges in Paris, who, by bribery, or by influence of friends, or in their own interest, or out of charity and moved by the entreaties of some fair and humble suppliant, will save the miserable life of the greatest rascal in the world, and, out of malice, or want of friends, or absence of money, are so inhuman to the most innocent that he is quite content not to fall into their hands. Not, indeed, that they are all bad, but the bad ones are more numerous than the good. He traces their enmity to his *Enfer*.

"Trop me sont ennemys
Pour leur enfer que par escript j'ay mis,
Où quelque peu de leurs tours je descœuvre,
Là me veult-on grand mal pour petit œuvre.
Mais je leur mis encor plus odieux
Dont je l'osay lire devant les yeulx
Tant cleir voyans de ta majesté haulte
Qui a pouvoir de réformer leur faulte."

He recalls to the king how he was once before imprisoned, and how he escaped their machinations by his good offices. It is all conceived in the finest spirit of flattery.

"Autant comme eulx, sans cause qui soit bonne,
Me veult de mal l'ignorante Sorbonne.
Bien ignorante elle est d'estre ennemye

De la trilingue et noble Académie
Qu' as erigée."[1]

"Certainly," he says, "if your majesty could look into the hearts of these 'Sorboniqueurs,' you would find them anything but loyal—as indeed might be expected, considering the great things your Majesty has done for arts and sciences."

As for himself, they have often used threats against him, the least and mildest of which was to get him executed. And with this wicked end in view, they call him *Luthériste*. Here Marot waxes exceedingly indignant, his orthodoxy, when danger threatened him, being almost boisterous.

"Luther pour moy des cieulx n'est descendu,
Luther en croix n'a point esté pendu
Pour mes péchez: et, tout bien advisé,
Au nom de luy en suis point baptizé.
Baptizé suis au nom qui tant bien sonne
Qu'au son de luy le Père Eternel donne
Ce que l'on quiert! le seul nom soubz les cieulx
En et par qui ce monde vicieux
Peult estre sauf!"

He makes an appeal to heaven, which, if one did not feel was theatrical, would be very striking. 'Let me be burned,' he cries, 'but let me be burned, not *pour cause folle*, but for Thee and Thy word.'

They have tried to seize him at Blois, but failed. They have laid hands on his library and on his precious papers. What if they have found forbidden books? Cannot a poet read everything—magic—necromancy—cabal?

[1] The Collége Royal, founded by Francis, with three professorships of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

"O juge sacrilège,
Qui t'a donné ne loy, ne privilège
D'aller toucher et faire tes massacres
Au cabinet des sainctes Muses sacres?"

He says that, on leaving Blois, he was on the point of going straight to the king, but was recommended not to venture, so he went another way. Observe how he takes credit for going to the king's sister:

"Évitant ce danger,
Non en pays, non à prince estranger,
Non point usant de fugitif destour,
Mais pour servir l'autre roy à mon tour,
Mon second maistre et ta sœur son épouse
A qui je fuz des ans à quatre et douze
De ta main noble heureusement donné."

This making a merit of his escape to the nearest place of safety is particularly clever.

"J'abandonnay, sans avoir commis crime,
L'ingrate France, ingrate, ingratissime
A son poëte: et en la délaissant,
Fort grand regret ne vint mon cueur blessant.
Tu ments, Marot, grand regret tu sentis
Quand tu pensas à tes enfans petis."

This is the only mention of his children, except one other, that he makes.

Then he crossed, he says, the great cold mountains, and came to the Lombard plains. Thence to Italy, where God directed his steps to the place in which resided a princess of the king's own blood.

"Parquoy, O syre, estant avecques elle,
Conclure puis, d'un franc cueur et vray zèle,

Qu'à moy ton serf ne peult estre donné
Reproche ancun que t'aye abandonné.
En protestant, si je pers ton service,
Qu'il vient plus tost de malheur que de vice."

It was here, too, that he wrote his celebrated *Blason*, which was instantly taken up and imitated by numberless poets. Floods of verse were poured out. *Blason* on a lady's eyebrow, on a lady's eye, on a lady's mouth, on her feet, on her nose. Clément, not ill-pleased with the success of his little piece, followed it up with a *Contre Blason*, and the imitators, veering round, followed suit in the same manner as before.

Fresh storms, however, were brewing. Ferrara grew too hot for him, and the duchess was obliged, under pressure from the pope, to send him away. The hunted bard betook himself to Venice, which he did not like, and from which place he wrote to the dauphin praying for a safe conduct—for six months—or, if that will not do, for half-a-year, because he wants to see his little *Marotteaulx*, and just to get one more run to court.

"Si je voys là mille bonnetz ostez:
Mille bons jours viendront de tous costez,
Tant de Dieu gars! tant qui m'embrasseront!
Tant de salutz[1] qui d'or point en seront!
Puis ce dira quelque langue friande;
'Et puis Marot, est-ce une grande viande
Qu'estre de France estrangé et banniz?'
'Par Dieu, monsieur'—ce diray-je—'nenny.'
Lors que de chère et grandes accollées!

[1] salut d'or, the name of a coin of Charles VI. On the face was represented the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

Prendray les bons, laisseray les vollées:
'Adieu, messieurs.' 'Adieu donc, mon mignon.'
Et cela faict, verrez le compaignon
Tost desloger.'

It is impossible for anything to be more spirited than this. His term up, he will go. At the same time, should the king wish to keep him—for it is the duty of every good subject to obey the king—he will stay.

Finally, it is only a little piece of paper that he wants. This is a thing given to the enemy every day. Much better give it to him than to some rascally Jack Spaniard (Jean d'Espaigne).

The persecution in France was relaxing. Francis had promised the pope that he would in future burn only those who held impious notions on the subject of the Eucharist, and consequently, that those who had erred only on minor points might return on making abjuration. As Clément did return we may suppose that he abjured his former errors. If, as he says in his letter to the king, he was no 'Lutherist,' this would have done no violence to his feelings; if he lied in his letter to the king, it would have done little violence to his feelings if he lied again. The fact is that strenuous efforts have been made to enrol Clément Marot on the side of the Protestants. As far as regards the moral worth of the man, the Catholics might be perfectly prepared to let him go; but, as the extracts I have given sufficiently shew, there was nothing that Marot was so eager to disclaim as the reputation of being a Lutheran. To abuse the priests was one thing—Guillaume de Lorris and Clément's other friends and models used to do that—but to go over to the side

of men who could give the holy bread to the pigs, cut off the head of the Blessed Virgin's image, tear down the sacred altars, and, above all, commit such intensely vulgar abuse as was contained in the placards, was a quite different thing. For Marot was a courtier and a gentleman, though a bourgeois by birth; plenty of gentlemen were found to set him an example by turning their wit against the Church—but none, or few, to set him the example of joining the howling, unwashed, ruffianly mob of image-breakers. Unfortunately, Clément, being cleverer than his friends and much more careless, went too far, and his enemies (with the notorious unforgivingness of priests) were resolved on his destruction. At this time came his dispute with the Abbé Sagon, a versifier of mean repute, but anxious to push himself into notoriety. We must pass over this literary quarrel, chiefly remarkable, like most literary quarrels, for its fertility in producing bad blood. Marot grows wise, and indisposed to set out on a new set of travels, or to venture on the terrors of the stake; but he grows rather stupid; the old fire is out of him; he is getting on in years; his friends are scattered; there is no more fun to be got out of the priests who burn you if you so much as wink at them; Marguerite is away with her husband, his 'second King'; and Francis has grown less débonnair of late.

With a view, however, to rehabilitate his reputation for orthodoxy, the luckless Clément, who could not let well alone, must needs publish a translation into French of the Psalms. This, at least, is my own interpretation of his motives. M. d' Héricault thinks that, pushed on by his old

acquaintances, 'les novateurs,' whom he had never wholly lost sight of, he was doomed to pay once more for their faults. If I could see any trace of tendency to the new opinions in his writings, I might acknowledge this plausible statement, but I see none; only the indifference of a man of the world and a wit, who found the Church fair game, was pushed on by praise, flattery, and vanity, to speak more freely than he ought to have done; suffered in consequence, and now, grown wiser with age, resolved to shew to the world how pious and orthodox he had become. What could be more orthodox than the Psalms of David?

Probably they were made in conjunction with Vatable[1] the Hebrew scholar, who furnished him with a literal translation from the original. Thirty of them were published at first. They had an enormous success. The king and all the courtiers set them to popular airs, to dances, to well-known songs, and went about singing them. Everyone chose his favourite. They were written under portraits by way of motto or device; they were sung all over Paris; they were shewn to Charles the Fifth, who was delighted with them, and who presented the poet with two hundred gold doublons; they seemed to be the great success of Clément's life, and he was joyfully meditating more translations from the same source, when—O fatal keenness and watchful suspicion of orthodoxy!—the Sorbonne—that very body against whom Marot had raised many a laugh in joyous times gone by—the Sorbonne declared them heretical.

[1] Vatable has the credit of Protestant principles, for no reason that I know, except that Etienne published certain notes to the Psalms under his name, which he does not appear to have written.

At this dreadful word the king left off singing them, so to speak, in the middle of a bar; the old profane words were hastily refitted to the old music; the court was restored to its proper worldliness and profanity; orthodoxy was avenged, and Marot fled again.

This time there was no place possible for him but Geneva. Thither he went, armed with his precious translations. It was a glorious windfall for the Reformers. Here was a set of hymns, perfectly harmless to both sides, but condemned by their adversaries as heretical. Not only were they harmless, but they were musical and sweet beyond any they had had before; besides, they were the work of the most famous poet in France, persecuted, as the rumour said, on account of his religious opinions, and obliged to fly to the pious and gentle Calvinists to avoid the hatred of those heretical blasphemers, the Catholics, for whose burning there was not enough wood in all the world. This most learned poet was a veritable brand plucked from the burning; a convert whose example would be held up by the sturdy Reformers as worthy of all imitation. Almost Paul-like in his misfortunes and suffering for the faith, twice had he been imprisoned, twice had he fled. Truly, a martyr.

Clément's appearance would seem to have betokened anything but religious fervour. His stature was short; he was prematurely grey and bald; his nose was flat and broad, a sure sign of humour, but not a sure sign of religious zeal; he had large round eyes, a smooth broad forehead, and his lips were thick and sensual. Still, in those days, personal appearance would go for little. Marot

was made welcome and instantly turned to account. Ten thousand copies, an enormous number for the time, of his Psalms were sold, Clément having added twelve more, and they were sung by the Genevan Protestants up to the eighteenth century. But a new misfortune befel the poet, ever buffeted about by an angry fate. Just as in France, a poor bird of pleasure, enjoying life where and how he could, and thinking of nothing less than a change of creed, he was accused of Lutheranism; so now in Geneva, a shining light among the Reformers, and perforce a heretic of the deepest dye, he was accused—sentenced to death, say some—of immorality. Perhaps the charge was true; at any rate he fled again, and his good friend, the best-hearted man of his time, Francis, protected him once more for the short space that remained to him of life. He was driven out of France in 1543; he was driven out of Geneva in 1544; and he died in Piedmont in the same year:

> "Quercy, la cour, le Piémont, l'univers,
> Me fit, me tint, m'enserra, me congneut.
> Quercy mon loz, la cour tout mon temps eut,
> Piémont mes os et l'univers mes vers."

After the copious extracts I have given of his works, it is somewhat superfluous to add any criticism. Unlucky in everything else, he was lucky in this, that his reputation was great in life, and increased after death. To this day, of all the poets whom we have considered; of all the poets who wrote in France up to the days of Ronsard, Clément Marot is the only one read by any but the curious. It is no wonder; in those qualities which go to make a poet of society, he is unequalled. I know nothing better, out

of Pope or Swift, than those lines of his when he pictures himself returning with a safe conduct and visiting the court. The assumption of the fact that he is no criminal, as patent to the Dauphin, and requiring neither proof nor comment, is itself a masterly stroke, and the lightness with which he imagines himself standing to receive the welcome of his friends, and then going back to his exile, is beyond all praise.

He was not a great poet, nor a thinker in any sense. A man of pleasure, but, judging from his writings, of refinement and courtliness; holding a deep abhorrence for hardship, suffering of all kind, and self-denial; using his extraordinary talent for making verses altogether in his own interests; vain of his reputation, heedless of what he said, so it was well said; and having that happy power, which seems specially to belong to this superficial sort of genius, of catching at the first glance the most salient point. He reminds me sometimes of Moore, sometimes of Pope, sometimes of Swift—but without Swift's vigour and without his ingrained coarseness; without Pope's illnature; and with all Moore's grace. I think I have mentioned nearly all his important poems, except *L' Enfer*, in which he recounts his imprisonment in the Chastelet.

Not to make this chapter too long, let us only now notice a few of his smaller pieces. Although he invented nothing, although he was of the age strictly, and not before the age at all, he is the king of epigram, rondeau, and ballad. His ease and felicity in the rondeau he probably derived from his father. In epigram he imitated, with his friend Mellin de Saint Gélais, Martial, whom he edited.

It has been complained of him, that "sa langue se prêtait mal à des pensées élevées," but the poor man had no elevation of thought. How should he, when his favourite poets were Lorris, Meung, and Villon? Let us accept our Clément for the good things that are in him,—and not quarrel with him, because he has not the grandeur of a Milton, nor the versatility of a Shakespeare.

ON A KISS FROM HIS MISTRESS.

'En la baisant, m'a dit, 'Amy sans blasme,
Ce seul baiser qui deux bouches embasme,
Les arres sont du bien tant espéré.'
Ce mot elle a doulcement proféré
Pensant du tout appaiser ma grande flamme:
Mais le mien cueur adonc plus elle enflamme
Car son alaine, adorant plus que basme,
Souffloit le feu qu'Amour m'a préparé,
En la baisant.

Brief, mon esprit, sans congnoissance d'âme,
Vivoit alors sur la bouche à ma dame
Dont se mouroit le corps enamouré:
Et si sa lèvre eust guères demouré
Contre la mienne, elle m'eust succé l'âme
En la baisant."

HUITAIN.

"Plus ne suis ce que j'ay esté,
Et ne le saurois jamais estre:
Mon beau printemps et mon esté
Ont faict le saut par la fenestre.
Amour, tu as esté mon maistre,
Je t'ay servy sur tous les dieux,
O si je povois deux fois naistre,
Comme je te servirois mieulx!"

DE OUY ET NENNY.

"Ung doulx nenny, avec ung doulx soubrire,
Est tant honneste: il le vous fault apprendre.
Quand est d'ouy, si veniez à le dire,
D'avoir trop dit je vouldrois vous rependre:
Non que je soys ennuyé d'entreprendre
D'avoir le fruict, dont le désir me poingt:
Mais je vouldrois qu'en me le laissant prendre
Vous me dissiez: 'Non, vous ne l'aurez point.'"

A LA ROYNE DE NAVARRE.

"Nous fusmes, sommes, et serons
Mort et malice et innocence;
Le pas de mort nous passerons;
Malice est tousjours en présence;
Dieu en nostre première essence
Nous voulut d'innocence orner:
O la mort pleine d'excellence,
Qui nous y fera retourner!"

ON THE SMILES OF MADEMOISELLE D'ALLEBRET.

"Ella a tres bien ceste gorge d'albastre,
Ce doulx parler, ce cler tainct, ces beaulx yeulx:
Mais, en effect, ce petit ris folastre
C'est, à mon gré, ce que luy sied le mieulx.
Elle en pourroit les chemins et les lieulx
Où elle passe, à plaisir inciter.
Et si ennuy me venoit contrister
Tant que par mort fust ma vie abattue,
Il ne fauldroit pour me resusciter,
Que ce ris là duquel elle me tue."

ON DIANA.

"Hommes expers, vous dictes par science
Que Dyane est en baisant beaucoup pire

Que n'est la mort: mais par expérience
De ce vous veulx et vous puis contredire:
Car quand sa bouche en la mienne souspire,
Toute vigueur dedans mon cueur s'assemble:
Vous resvez doncq, on certes il fault dire
Qu'en la baisant, mourir vivre me semble."

Of his wife, nothing is known; of his "petits Marotteaux," only one has left any sign behind. This was Michel Marot, who was page to Marguerite of France in 1534. He has left three or four pieces behind him, one of which, the Ode to the Queen of Navarre, begins:

"Ma princesse,
Ma maistresse,
Je suis le fils de Clément."

And that is all that is known about Michel.

Like many other poets, from Ovid downwards, Marot had a vast opinion of his own reputation. He tells the Dauphin that he is meditating a work, si ma muse s'enflamme,

"Qui, malgré temps, malgré fer, malgré flamme,
Et malgré mort, fera vivre sans fin
Le roi François et son noble dauphin."

Certainly, so long as the French language continues to be spoken, Clément Marot will be read, and will tell the ages of the many times he tested the friendship of the good king Francis, and found it sincere. One rises from the perusal of Marot with a feeling somewhat akin to contempt, mixed with liking. He was so continually in scrapes; was so helpless and dependent; was so constantly begging; so perpetually unlucky, and so persistently careless,—that one

feels towards him much as one would have felt towards Oliver Goldsmith—"A monstrous clever man, sir; but a child might turn him. And dissipated, I am told."

In person, Marot was, like Goldsmith and Moore, of small stature and stout. His portrait, as I have said above, indicates a temperament sensual and easy, with that sort of *tournure* which agrees with what we are told of the vanity of the man.

Let me conclude my notice of Marot with an epigram by Theodore Beza:

CLEMENTI MAROTO.

Tam docte Venerem divinus pinxit Apelles,
Illi ut credatur visa fuisse Venus.
At tamtam sapiunt Venerem tua scripta, Maroto,
Ut tibi credatur cognita tota Venus.

NOTE I.

The Twelfth Eclogue of Spenser's Shepherd's Kalendar is, in parts, almost a translation of Marot. For instance, compare the following with the lines in page 254:

"Whilome in youth, when flowed my joyfull spring,
Like swallows swift I wandered here and there:
For heate of heedlesse lust me so did sting,
That I of doubted daunger had no feare:
I went the wasteful woodes and forest wide,
Withouten dreade of wolves to been espyed.

I wont to raunge amydde the mazie thickette,
And gather nuttes to make me Christmas game,
And joyed oft to chace the trembling Pricket,
Or hunt the hartlesse hare till she was tame.
What wreaked I of wintrye age's waste?
Tho deemed I my spring would ever laste.

How often have I scaled the craggie oke,
All to dislodge the raven of her nest?
How have I wearied with many a stroke
The stately walnut tree, the while the rest
Under the tree fell all for nuts at strife?
For ylike to me was libertee and lyfe."

NOTE II.

From the Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, 1535. Lundi. 25 Jan. . . . : Adjournez à son de trompette à trois briefs jours par les carrefours de Paris, jusques au nombre de soixante trois Lutheriens, qui s'en estoient fuis hors Paris, à comparoir en personnes, et à faulte de non comparoir, estre attains du cas. . . et condamnez à estre broulez. Desquelz appelez estoit Caroli, prestre. . . . maistre Clément Marot. . . .

CHAPTER XIII.

CLOTILDE DE SURVILLE.

In the year 1803 there appeared in Paris a very remarkable collection of poems, said to be of the fifteenth century. The editor, M. Vanderbourg, professed to have received from the widow of an ex-officer of the ancien regime a bundle of Manuscripts which contained the poems, never till then published, of a woman of his family remarkable alike for learning, genius, beauty, and piety. Certainly the published verses sufficiently attested to the genius of the writer. In an illiterate age, these were learned; in a comparatively gross age, these were perfectly pure; in an age of bad taste, these were in good taste; in an age of turmoil, trouble, and disaster, these were quiet and self-contained; and in an age of affectation, these were simple. Moreover, whereas the diction of the known poets of the time—of Alain Chartier and Charles of Orleans—was comparatively obscure, that of the newly found poetess, Madame de Surville, was clear, easy, and graceful. Consider the delight with which we should welcome a poem—of the fifteenth century—as sweet and touching as any in the

nineteenth. Consider the glory of finding a writer of the time of Henry the Fifth as easy and as simple as Shakespeare. And then imagine the rapture of the Parisians at finding, in an unknown author of the time of mad Charles the Sixth, all the beauties of their own day, with all the canons of taste (not then laid down) inviolate and perfect.

This was what Monsieur Vanderbourg offered them. The first edition was speedily run out, but, alas! before the second had time to appear, it was necessary for the editor to gird on his armour, and sally forth to defend the fair fame of his protégée. This had been attacked. Clotilde de Surville was accused, not of those offences which womankind visit so severely; not of the minor sins which are sometimes forgiven; not of any feminine or even human crimes, delinquencies, or shortcomings, but of the grand, unpardonable offence of never having *been*. "There is not"—said the critics—"there is not, and there never has been, any Madame Clotilde de Surville at all." M. Vanderbourg was equal to the occasion. Perhaps he had anticipated some such attack. He rose in his wrath, and in his next edition, that of 1805, he smote his enemies, hip and thigh, with great slaughter. So he said: they on the other hand, not knowing when they were beaten, replied that there was no slaughter at all; that they had the best of it; that all the arguments of M. Vanderbourg were worthless; and they repeated that, in short, there was no Madame Clotilde de Surville at all, and never had been. Further, that the original genuine Clotilde was nobody but the late Marquis de Surville; and, if it was not he, it was no one but M. Vanderbourg himself. The critics are dead

now, and M. Vanderbourg too; and the question is as far off as ever from being settled. We can, however, hear at least the editor's account of his first acquaintance with the manuscript, and the story of the late Marquis de Surville.

Joseph Étienne, Marquis de Surville, the representative of an old and very honourable French family, was born in the year 1755. At an early age he entered the Royal service; was present at the war of Corsica, and afterwards served in the American war of Independence. He attained the rank of Colonel Général in the French army, and when the trouble of the Revolution began, he did what most of his class thought it prudent to do, emigrated, to wait for better times. It would have been well for him if he had waited. Unfortunately he came back in 1798, and was *fusillé*.

The Marquis seems to have had all the virtues of his class. He was brave, chivalrous, and reckless. Quarrelling once, it is said, with a certain Captain Middleton of the English navy on the respective merits of their countries, he fought the gallant captain with sabres, (which they called leaving to the judgment of God to decide which had the more honourable country,) till they both dropped from exhaustion and loss of blood. His loyalty was of that ideal purity of which we hear so much, and find so little in those times. He would have been one of the Cavaliers of Charles the First; the sworn brother in arms to the Chevalier Bayard; a gallant breaker of lances and contemner of the villain or the bourgeois, had fate willed his birth earlier. As it was he did what he could; he agitated for the Royal house, intrigued for them, conspired for them, and died for them.

He wrote great quantities of verse. These, for the sins of his generation, have never been published. We have so much to read now, that it is to be hoped they have all been lost. But his brother assured M. Vanderbourg that they were prolix, tedious, and wanting in simplicity; a criticism which, if it is genuine, is important to remember, for the simple reason that the so-called verses of Clotilde are neither prolix nor tedious.

According to the account of his editor, the Marquis, in the year 1782, while looking through the family archives, chanced upon an old bundle of manuscripts, which, on investigation, turned out to be the hitherto unknown poems of a long-forgotten member of his own family. These manuscripts he shewed to his brother, who being, it is presumed, a person of no great poetical enthusiasm, thought little of them, and took no interest at all in the discovery. He also shewed them to a certain M. De F. (name not given) who informed M. Vanderbourg that he saw a lot of old writings very hard to read. The testimony of M. De F. is not very important, except that it proves, provided it is true, that certain old manuscripts did exist.

The Marquis then, he states, proceeded, as a preliminary measure, to study old French, and in course of time succeeded in deciphering a great part of the documents. He also shewed his brother several "cahiers" full of these transcriptions. His unsympathetic brother again felt little interest in the matter.

At the time of his emigration he appears to have taken these cahiers, or some of them, with him, and to have left the original MSS. behind him at his château. But in 1793,

he being then in Liége, and his sisters in prison at Viviers, his mother, who was alone at the Castle, was obliged to give up all the family papers in a mass to the Revolutionary Committee, by whom they were burnt, made into gunwads, or otherwise disposed of—at all events, hopelessly lost.

Again, at the time of his execution he had with him a trunk containing more of his transcriptions, which he confided to a certain postmaster, and which also perished. But —and this is certainly a strong point—whereas he never shewed the least anxiety about his own poetical effusions, his last thoughts, on the eve of his death, were about the safety of the poems of his ancestress. M. Vanderbourg gives the last letter he wrote to his wife. He says:

"Je ne puis te dire maintenant où j'ai laissé quelques manuscrits de ma propre main relatifs aux œuvres immortelles de Clotilde, que je voulois donner au public. Ils te seront remis quelque jour par des mains amies à qui je les ai spécialement recommandés. Je te prie d'en communiquer quelque chose à des gens de lettres capables de les apprécier, et d'en faire après cela l'usage que te dictera la sagesse. Fais en sorte au moins que ces fruits de mes recherches ne soient pas totalement perdus pour la postérité, surtout pour l'honneur de ma famille dont mon frère reste l'unique et dernier soutien."

Finally, we understand that a hand had been at work on the manuscripts before that of the Marquis, and that in the seventeenth century a certain Madame Jeanne de Vallon de Surville had wished to edit them, but was prevented by her early death from carrying her purpose into execution.

M. Vanderbourg first saw the poems in 1794, when he copied three pieces which struck him as very remarkable. He then went to America, where he stayed some years; and on his return, finding that the Marquis was dead, he wrote to his widow to inquire into the fate of the manuscripts. Receiving from her all that she could find, he published them in a collected form.

The points of attack are these:

1. Why should Clotilde alone have escaped from the general corruption of taste?

2. How, when even the Royal Library contained no more than nine hundred volumes, should she be so well acquainted with ancient literature, and be able to imitate where her contemporaries could hardly copy?

3. Why did she remain unknown to the end of the eighteenth century?

4. Some critics also assert that they have found in her writings allusion to the system of Copernicus, Copernicus then being only just born; some refutation of Lucretius, then not printed; reference to the satellites of Saturn not yet discovered; words which did not then exist in the French language; poetical forms not then in use; and allusions to the state of France so exactly applicable to the eighteenth century as to make it impossible to account for the coincidence by any theory of the distracted reigns of the Sixth and Seventh Charles.

Some of these objections are answered at once if we consider that the manuscripts are said to have passed through the hands of two transcribers, Jeanne de Surville in the seventeenth, and Joseph Étienne de Surville in the

eighteenth century; granting the existence of the old poetry, it is quite impossible to say how much has been added, taken away, or altered. All anachronisms may be put down to the account of the two transcribers, and the ordinary arguments used to convict of a forgery are in this case deprived of half their value. Chatterton, for instance, laid himself open to conviction on the discovery of a single word later than the assigned date of his manuscript. The editor of Clotilde, it may be, taught by history, carefully guards against such an accident. The argument of improbability may be brought to bear so strongly as almost to enforce a conviction; but no other argument has any weight at all. The last objection, for instance, assumes enormous weight when we read the following passage. And yet it is only an objection of improbability. No sentence in it but would strictly apply to France under Charles the Sixth: and yet hardly a sentence which would not apply to France in 1795. To shew more completely the *modern* spirit of the lines, I write them in modern spelling, without, however, altering the words:

"Banni par ses sujets, le plus noble des princes
Erre, et proscrit en ses propres remparts,
De chateaux en chateaux, et de villes en villes,
Contraint de fuir lieux ou devrait regner,
Pendant qu'hommes felons, clercs, et troupes serviles
L'osent—O crime!—en jugement assigner.
Non, non—ne peult durer tant coupable vertige:
O peuple Franc reviendras à ton roy!

De tant de maux, ami, ce penser me console:
Onc n'a pareils vengé divin secours:
Comme degats de flots, de volcans, et d'Eole:
Plus sont affreux, plus crois que seront courts."

It is impossible to say who wrote these lines, but we can be very sure that they were penned by no poet of the fifteenth century, and inspired by no misfortunes of the unhappy wanderer Charles. Many other passages might be quoted, where the modern spirit is most prominent and unmistakable, but this for the present will suffice.

As for the other objections, a long and rambling defence is set up by the Marquis, or rather by the editor, out of the Marquis's papers.

Taste, he says, was never wholly corrupted. There has been, from Heloïse downwards, a long stream of French poetesses of true genius and pure taste. The more eminent names he cites. And he gives extracts from the poems which remain of these women, to substantiate his statement. He then gives us a long and detailed life of Clotilde, which we shall come to presently.

As for her obscurity, that is accounted for by the fact of her retired country life; the wretched state of France during the whole of that century; the enmity and rivalry of Alain Chartier; the court poet (though it is hard to see what this has to do with it); and the fact that from her fortieth year she seems to have refused altogether any invitations to go out into the world. Her great contemporary, too, Charles of Orleans, was utterly unknown as a poet for three hundred years after his death. Neither Boileau, nor Ronsard, nor Du Bellay, nor Marot makes the least mention of his name: nor was it till 1734 that he fell into the hands of the Abbé Sallier, and was published by him. This fact is so striking that the objection to Clotilde's obscurity is answered at once by it. For if a great prince, the father of Louis XII.

of France, could write reams of verses and yet wholly fall into oblivion, how much more an obscure country lady, writing during the intervals of a long and retired life, with no audience but her immediate little circle of friends?

We ask in vain for the original manuscripts; the Marquis tells us how they were lost: *that* Revolution! We seek for proof that Clotilde's words were all used in the fifteenth century; in vain, for Jeanne de Vallon had transcribed, perhaps improved, the manuscripts in the seventeenth, and the Marquis in the eighteenth. When we read the life and story of Clotilde, it is fair to expect that her idioms will agree with those of her birthplace and time—but of this difficulty the Marquis says nothing; that some reason should be given, some at least possible explanation of the manner in which she anticipated the genius of the language; that some notice should be taken of her regularity of metre, and of many other things. But the Marquis on these points is silent.

But if Clotilde did not write these poems, who did? The Marquis de Surville, say some. But he wrote in quite a different style; he was prolix, tedious; he wanted grace, he wanted simplicity. Who says so? His brother. To whom did his brother say so? To M. Vanderbourg. Is it possible that in so stirring a time, and in such a short and busy life, he should have found time for such a complicated forgery? Lastly, do men on the very point of death persist in lies, and even invent more?

As for the time required to write these poems, the Marquis confessedly wrote a lot of poetry; where is it all? Lost. Who saw it? His brother? And as for the per-

sistence in a lie, it is no new thing for men to go to the block and the gallows with a lie in their mouths. I do not know what were the religious convictions of M. de Surville, but we know what were those of his class and time, and I think it is not difficult to believe that a man who would have died a hundred deaths rather than sully his own honour by saying the thing that was not as regards himself, would yet, in the cause of his family name, have maintained to the death the authenticity of poems, of which his own pen had been the main maker.

A code of honour does not necessarily imply a strict adherence to logic, and what would be a base and unpardonable lie in one case, might appear in another only a Spartan adherence to the honour of a name. In the recommendation of his last letter it is possible to see the vanity of the author as well as the pride of the nobleman. In the fame of Clotilde, Joseph Étienne and the name of De Surville would live again.

If De Surville did not forge the documents, perhaps M. Vanderbourg did. No one I believe ever saw the transcripts of the Marquis, or his letters, his cahiers, or his notes. Only, to forge the whole of these two volumes must have been a work of such tremendous labour that it is impossible to believe that either M. Vanderbourg or M. De Surville could have singly performed it. I say nothing of the audacity of the attempt, for many such have been made almost as audacious and equally successful. To construct a whole epic out of nothing, and call it the work of Fingal, seems an extraordinary piece of boldness; but there the writer had some Gaelic fragments, apparently, to give him some sort

of groundwork for his phraseology, and the rest being in modern English, was comparatively easy. Here we are asked to believe that a man who died at forty, who spent his life in active pursuits, a great fighting man and a great intriguer, should deliberately set himself to work to counterfeit the language of the fifteenth century, and, in order to magnify his own family, should manufacture a story with all sorts of adjuncts, circumstantial evidence, and literary documents, of which he should be so fond and so proud as to ask for its publication, and maintain its genuineness, with his latest breath. It is hard to believe; but—it is not impossible.

Villemain accepts the work as most remarkable, and sums up in these words:

"Quand on a lu Charles d'Orleans, on reconnait dans les poësies de Clotilde une fabrication moderne qui se trahit par la perfection même de l'artifice.... La fraude une fois prouvée reste le merite de la fraude en ellemême. Ces poësies sont charmantes."

These difficulties and objections being fairly laid down, let us, to save further trouble, consider this shadowy poetess as a real flesh and blood woman of the fifteenth century, it being agreed that every one may make any mental reservation that he pleases. The details of her life, it is premised, are drawn from the family archives, maliciously and wickedly burnt by the Revolutionary Committee in the year 1795.

Marguerite Eleanor Clotilde de Vallon Chalys, Dame de Surville, was born in the year 1405, at the château of Vallon near the town of Viviers in Vivarez. Viviers is

a small town now in the department of Ardéche on the river Rhone, some forty miles above Avignon. South of the Province of Vivarez were the classic fields of Languedoc and Provence; but whatever inspiration the young Clotilde drew from the neighbouring land of the troubadours, she is indebted to them for no idioms of her language. She writes, unaccountably, in pure Langue d' Oil. Her mother, Pulcherie de Fay Collan, was a woman of great taste, learning, and vivacity. She had been attached to the household of Gaston Phœbus, Count of Foix and Béarn, and while there made such good use of the library as to become a proficient in Latin, Italian, and French literature; and even, it is said, though this one must really believe to be an exaggeration, in Greek. These acquirements she imparted to her daughter Clotilde, with extraordinary success. At the early age of twelve the young lady wrote verses of such singular merit that Christine de Pisan declared herself ready to resign the sceptre of Parnassus in favour of the child. At sixteen years of age she married Berenger de Surville whom she passionately loved. Soon after her marriage she wrote the Heroïde to him, on the occasion of his joining the king, and consequent separation from her:

"Clotilde au sien amy doulce mande accolade
À son espoulx, salut, respect, amour!
Ah! tandis qu'esplorée et de cœur si malade,
Je quier la nuict, te redemande au jour,
Que deviens, où cours-tu? loing de ta bien aymée,
Où les destins entraisnent donc tes pas?
Faut que le dize, hélas! s'en croy la renommée,
De bien long temps ne te revoyrai pas!

Pardonne maigntz souleys à ceste qui t'adore;
A tant d'amour èst permis quelqu'effroy:
Ah! dez chasque matin que l'Olympe se dore,
Se me voyiez montant sur le beffroy,
Pourmenant mes regards tant que peuvent s'estendre,
Et me livrant à d'impuysans dezirs!
Folle que je suis—hélaz—m'est advis de t'attendre;
Illusion me tient lieu de playzirs!

Lors nul n'est estrangier à ma vive tendresse:
Te cuyde veoir: me semble te parler:
'Là,' me dis-je, 'ay receu sa dernière caresse.'
Et jusqu'aux oz soudain me sens brusler.
'Icy, les ung ormeil cerclé par aubespine
Que doulx printemps jà coronoit des flours,
Me dict adieu.' Sanglots suffoquent ma poitrine,
Et dans mes yeulx roulent torrents de plours.

Où que suyves ton roy, ne mets ta doulce amye
En tel oubly qu'ignore où gist ce lieu:
Jusqu'alors en soulcy, de calme n'aura mye.
Plus ne t'en dye; que t'en soubvienne. Adieu."

It will hardly be believed that the envious Alain Chartier pronounced against this effusion. He said that it wanted the air of the court. Clotilde, in other respects the most amiable of her sex, never forgave the insult. There are, indeed, few women who can forgive an accusation of vulgarity. To impeach their youth, or their good looks, or their kind temper, is venial; but to charge them with vulgar manners is indeed unpardonable,—and to this day survive the rondeaux in which her pen is filled with revengeful gall against him who wrought the wrong. Her married life lasted seven years. During this time she lived surrounded by her family and her friends. Of these, who were chiefly poetical young ladies, we hear mostly of her doulce amye

Rocca. Then it was that she planned her long poem first called Lygdamir, and then Phelypéide; and undertook her romance of the "Chastel d'Amour." After the death of her husband, which took place in 1428, her happy life was broken up and her friends dispersed, some to go into a convent, some to marry. She was left with one son, to whom she devoted at first her whole time. Subsequently, feeling the want of a poetical circle, she adopted two young ladies, Sophie de Lyonne and Juliette de Vivaray, and made them her pupils and disciples. It is hinted that these demoiselles permitted themselves to fall in love with the young De Surville, and in consequence of the hopelessness of their attachment retired to a convent. After this we hear of no more pupils—only the son married, and after his death his daughter remained unmarried with her grandmother till her death, which took place after 1495, the lady having lived upwards of ninety years, and written poetry for fourscore. Well might the Marquis speak of his collections at Liége, his trunk with the postmaster, and the precious mass destroyed by the Revolutionary Committee.

In 1440 Charles of Orleans returned to France. Alain Chartier at this time published a translation of Aulus Gellius with a preface, in which he attacked, quite without provocation, the Dame de Surville. Clotilde replied by a rondel, which attracted great attention at the court, and followed up her advantage by a solemn letter of poetical thanks to the duke of Burgundy, by whose munificence Charles had been ransomed. Naturally, this called forth the warmest gratitude of the royal poet, and in conjunction with Margaret of Scotland, the wife of Louis XI., he sent

her a crown of golden laurel, with the device "Margaret of Scotland to Margaret of Helicon."

The story of Clotilde's life culminates with this honour. Of her remaining fifty years of life we have no record, save that she resisted any invitation to leave her country retreat, and that she did not die till after the victory of Farnova which she celebrates, at the age of ninety, with as much vigour as if she had been thirty.

The poems and fragments which M. Vanderbourg published amount to two volumes, which could very easily be compressed into one small octavo volume of two hundred pages. Yet he tells us that the whole collection originally designed for publication by the late Marquis would have amounted to no less than eight octavo volumes of eight hundred pages each—that is to say, six thousand four hundred pages, or at least two hundred thousand lines. Certainly, with all respect to our author be it said, we owe the French Revolution for burning some of these one small debt of gratitude. The collection consisted of poems, songs, romances, dramas; two "plaidoyers" in favour of Jaques Cœur the 'grand argentier' of France; a history of Atlantis in twelve books—let us be thankful that this is lost; a theory of colours (!); a complete history of French poetry, with curious notices on the lives and works of poetesses; and memoirs of the period. There were originally eight books of memoirs, of which the Marquis found five entire; the "remaining *two*," he says, being lost. There was another work of Clotilde's, the nature of which is not stated, but which is also lost. These, indeed, be labours.

Here is another small piece from the Heroïde:

"Quand revoyray, diz moy, ton si duyzant vizaige?
Quand te pourray face à face myrer?
T'enlacer tellement à mon frément corsaige,
Que toy, ni moy, n'en puyssions respirer?"

Here is a burst of patriotism:

"Te le redys, amy: jà l'entrevoy ceste heure
Où, triomphant de si noirs attentatz,
Charles de ses ayeulx va purgeant la demeure,
Et libérer ses coulpables estatz!
L'Éternel d'un regard brize enfin mille obstacles,
Des cieulx ouverts veille encor sur nos lys:
Eust il au monde engtier desnyé des miracles,
Il en debvroit au trosne de Clovis."

The fifth line smacks terribly of the eighteenth century.

Here is a graceful 'Rondel' to her friend Rocca, who asked her if she recollected the first "tintement d'Amour."

"Se m'en soubvient ceste heure tant belle
Où mon amy vers moy vint accourant;
Plus beau cent fois que la roze nouvelle,
Ne voyd zéphir d'elle s'enamourant,
Ez moys gentilz que chante Philoméle.
Lorsque me dict: 'Plus ne veulx, demoyselle,
Aultres desduicts qu'estre pour vous souffrant.'
Vys mon esmoy: puys demandes, cruelle,
Se m'en soubvient.

Pour ceste, emprez qu'eust dict, 'Fiere pucelle,
Estes à moi,' qu'eust de bayzers couvrant
Secrets appas que traistre Amour décéle,
Faict en ses braz senty qu'alloy mourant,
Pas trop, ma foy, ne me soubvient d'icelle,
Se m'en soubvient."

Here is another of the same kind, and equally graceful:

"Qu' au cler de la lune ay deduict, se me voy
Seulette éz bords d'ung crystal de fontaine!
Ung soir y vint mon espoulx et mon roy:
Bayzer m' y prist: ne le sentys qu' à payne,
Et sy pourtant fus je toute en esmoy—
Me courrouciay: n' avoit encor ma foy
(Sy bien mon cœur, car l'eust de prime aubaine)
Oncques n' ozions nous dire tu ny toy,
Qu' au cler de lune.

Donc me fachay: puys comme il se tient coy,
Luy pardonnay; sur ce dict, 'O ma rayne!
N' en coustoit plus d' en prendre une vingtaine,
Se l' avoy sceu!' Fayz donc, amy; pourquoy
M' as veu de nuict: n' est tant la faute à moy
Qu' au cler de lune."

I think the last stanza perfectly delicious. Nothing could be simpler and yet more gracefully turned. The word "coy" is not used in the sense of our *coy*. It is derived from *quietus*, and means, here, well-behaved and quiet. The English *coy* is of course the same word with changed meaning.

But the lines by which her name is best known are the verses on her first-born. If they are really, even in an altered form, the work of a woman of her period, they are simply the most beautiful, time and tongue considered, in the French language. But, alas! they have a suspicious family resemblance to the well-known lines, "Dors, cher enfant: clos ta paupiére." I give them with such slight changes in the spelling as to shew more fully their modern spirit, partly hidden in their antique dress. There are fifteen verses, of which I give eight:

"O cher enfantelet, vrai portrait de ton père,
Dors sur le sein que ta bouche a pressé!
Dors, petit; clos, ami, sur le sein de ta mère,
Ton doux œillet par le somme oppressé.

Bel ami, cher petit, que ta pupille tendre
Goutte un sommeil qui plus n'est fait pour moi!
Je veille pour te voir, te nourrir, te defendre...
Ains qu'il m'est doux ne veillir que pour toi!

Dors, mon enfantelet, mon souci, mon idole!
Dors sur mon sein, le sein qui t'a porté!
Ne m'esjouit encore le son de ta parole,
Bien ton souris cent fois m'aye enchanté.
O cher enfantelet etc.

Étend ses brasselets: s'epand sur lui le somme:
Se clost son œil: plus ne bouge... il s'endort...
N'etait ce teint fleuri des couleurs de la pomme,
Ne le diriez, dans les bras de la mort?

Arrête... cher enfant... j'en frémis toute entière!
Réveille toi! chasse un fatal propos!
Mon fils! pour un moment... ah! revois la lumière!
Au prix du ton rends moi tout mon repos...

Douce erreur! il dormoit... c'est assez: je respire:
Songes legers, flattez son doux sommeil:
Ah! quand verrai celui pour que mon cœur soupire,
Aux mes côtés, jouir di son reveil?
O cher enfantelet etc.

Te parle et ne m'entends,.. eh! que disje?... insensée!
Plus n'oiroit il quand fût moult éveillé...:
Pauvre cher enfançon!... cher fils de ta pensée
L'echevelet n'est encore debrouillé.

Tretous avons été, comme es toi, dans cette heure:
Triste raison que trop tôt n'adviendra!
En la paix dont jouis, s'est possible, ah! demeure!
À tes beaux jours même il n'en souviendra
O cher enfantelet etc."

"Those," says M. Villemain, quoted above, "who have read Charles of Orleans will have no difficulty in seeing at once that these are not poems of the fifteenth century." This is to me a fact beyond all question, but the difficulty still remains as to the share in the business due to the Marquis de Surville. I prefer to think that he did really find a mass of manuscripts; that many of these had passed through the hands of Madame Jeanne and Vallon de Surville; that he transcribed some; and that many were burnt by the Revolutionary Committee. But I think that he transcribed those already touched-up by Jeanne of the seventeenth century; that he added lines of his own, whole stanzas—in imitation; that many passages (in particular that beginning

"Banny par ses subjects, le plus noble des princes,")

are wholly due to his pen; and that, had he lived longer, a great mass of verses, the combined work of Clotilde, Jeanne, and Joseph Etienne—

"Three poets in three distant ages born,"

would have been given to the world.

If the poems are genuine, which is, as a whole, impossible, Clotilde de Surville was the most remarkable genius that France has produced; if they are altogether a forgery, which I hold to be also impossible, Messieurs de Surville and Vanderbourg, conjointly or separately, were more audacious importers than Chatterton, Ireland, and Macpherson, rolled together.

If the story of her life is true, there is no more beautiful

picture of the time than that of Clotilde de Surville. Her life was wholly a life of love. She passed from her mother's heart to her husband's; from her husband's to her son's; from her son's to her granddaughter's. In the quiet little village where she lived, not far from the busy country-town of Viviers, the waves of war and desolation broke far away, and their rolling was almost unheard by her. The Burgundians and the Armagnacs fought in the streets of Paris; the English at Azincourt laid low the glory and pride of France; the poor distracted king was hurried from place to place; the English conqueror ruled in Paris; the baby English king was turned out, he and his; better days dawned for the honour of her land; and through it all, in the old country château, the lady lives quietly writing her poetry; training her son and her granddaughter; and trying to teach young ladies the art of making rondeaux, romances, sirventes, and tençons. In all those rude times there was, perhaps, to be found no more quiet tranquil corner in France than the country home of the Dame de Surville. Margaret of Hélicon had a better time of it than Margaret of Scotland. Only, perhaps—it is a dreadful thought, and will *not* be stifled—perhaps there was no Marguerite Eleanor Clotilde de Vallon Chalys, Dame de Surville—at all.

NOTE.—Hallam passes poor Clotilde by with the most contemptuous air, classing her with Rowley and Ireland's Vortigern. She does not deserve this treatment, and, as I think I have shewn, every objection to her can be answered, except one—which is indeed difficult—the *modern air* of her poetry. An old poet may be touched up and modernized in appearance, but never in spirit. I am, however, after reconsidering the

question, inclined to believe that, with an immense quantity of addition and a great many forgeries, Clotilde had a real existence, and actually wrote poetry, some of which we have in the volume of M. Vanderbourg. I have put her last of my poets, not to give offence to those weaker brethren who cannot believe in her.

Another poetess whose claim to existence has been disputed is Clémence Isaure. She is said to have been born in the year 1460, to have suffered from the death of her betrothed lover, and to have revived the Floral Games of Toulouse. I fear she is even more apocryphal than Clotilde. Those who are curious about her may consult the pamphlet by Doctor J. B. Noulet, called, "De Dame Clémence Isaure, substituée a Notre Dame la Vierge Marie comme Patronne des Jeux Littéraires de Toulouse."

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

THE ENGLISH POEMS OF CHARLES OF ORLEANS.

DURING his long residence in England, Charles learned to write English with as much fluency as French. His English poems, some of which deserve to be better known, are mostly translations or imitations of his French works. They have been published for the Roxburghe Club. It does not come within my limits to consider these poems in detail, but I cannot refrain from giving one or two illustrations of his English style. It will be remarked that the English of the fifteenth century was much farther from the language of Shakespeare than the French of the same time from that of Corneille.

"When y am leyd to slepe as for a stound
To have my rest y can in no manere
For all the nyght myn hert aredith round
As in the romaunce of plesaunt Chaucer
Me praiying so as him to hark and here
And y ne dar his welle disobeye
In dowting so to do hym displesere
This is my slepe y falle into decay."

This is on his mistress, and is almost literally translated:

"Fresshe bewtie riche of yowthe and lustines
The smiling lookis casten so lowely
The pleasaunt speche governyd bi wittynes
Body well shape of port so womanly
The high estat demenyd so swetely
The well ensewridnes of word and chere
Without disdeyne shewyng to lowe and hye
Alle thewis goode this hath my lady dere
For whiche all folk hir prayse and so do y.

So well becometh the nobill good princes
To synge or daunce in all disport trewly
That of such thing she may be called maystres
What that she doth is done so pratily
That none it may amenden hardily
She is the skol of all goodly manere
Also hir beholt may lere that is witty
Or in sight hath his deedes to aspy
Alle thewis goode this hath my lady dere."

Here I have altered some of the spelling:

"As for farewell, farewell, farewell, farewell,
And of farewell, more than a thousand score,
Have ye farewell, or more had I to dele
For forto say this parting doth me sore.
It doth, it doth, it need no more be sore,
For though that I would keep it close, ma fay,
My bollid heart doth so his sikis rore
That maugre me it doth my well bewray."

As may be expected, many French terms are found. Thus he says:

"Take it in *gree*, O goodly young princesse."
"Howe that my trouthe shall gete me *suffisance*."
"Mawgre daunger."

And in the following piece a great many words of French origin may be observed. The lines themselves are a very good specimen of his style.

"This joyous time, this fresh seson of May,
When Flora sheweth of flowers abundance
That each annoy ought to be laid away
And for to take all gladsome lo pleasance.
I find myself withouten recouerance
Most out of way own joy for to conquer
Each thought and care so doth my heart forfelle
That I have well I may avaunte and swear
The contrary of all my wretched will."

Most of these words fairly belonged to English by that time, but he uses others which I think are purely of his own introduction. What, for instance, is *newous* thought? The French explains it: it is pensée *ennuyeuse*. I believe this is the only attempt to adopt this word in English, though we want it badly.

All that has been said about Charles's French verses apply to his English; but the faults of the French are more apparent in his English, which, although he writes it easily enough, wants the flexibility that we find in the native English poetry of his time, particularly in the Religious Poems published by Mr. Furnivall for the Early English Text Society. Charles's English was that of the court in the first place, and of a foreigner in the second. Probably his English verses were looked on by him as an amusement for his long hours of captivity; their subjects, as well as his method of treatment, will effectually prevent them from ever being read again, except by the curious.

APPENDIX II.

I SUBJOIN a few specimens of translations. The first four are taken from Longfellow's *Poetry of Europe.*

FROM FROISSART.

"Take time while yet it is in view,
For Fortune is a fickle fair:
Days fade, and others spring anew:
Then take the moment still in view.
What boots to toil and cares pursue?
Each month a new moon hangs in air:
Take then the moment still in view,
For Fortune is a fickle fair."

FROM CHRISTINE DE PISAN.

ON THE DEATH OF HER FATHER.

"O that his grave for me had room
Where I at length might calmly rest!
For all to me is saddest gloom,
All scenes appear to me unblest.
And all my hope is in his tomb,
To lay my head on his cold breast,
Who left his child naught else to love,—
A mourning dove!

FROM MARTIAL DE PARIS.

Dear the felicity,
  Gentle and fair and sweet;
Love and simplicity,
  When tender shepherds meet;
Better than store of gold,
  Silver and gems untold,
Manners refined and cold,
  Which to our lords belong.
We, when our toil is past,
  Softest delight can taste,
While summer beauties last,
  Dance, feast, and jocund song;
And in our hearts a joy
  No envy can destroy."

FROM MAROT.

"I am no more what I have been,
  Nor can regret restore my prime:
My summer years and beauty's sheen
  Are in the envious clutch of Time.
Above all gods I owned thy reign,
  O Love! and served thee to the letter;
But if my life were given again,
  Methinks I yet would serve thee better."

FROM ALAIN CHARTIER.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCY.

"I heard the lover sighing wonder sore,
  For aye the more the sorer it him sought;
His inward paine he could not keep in store,
  Nor for to speak so hardie was he wrought.

"His leech was rare, the greater was his thought,
He mused sore his conquest to desire;
For no man may to more pennance be brought
Than in his heat to bring him to the fire."

Attributed to CHAUCER.

FROM EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS.

"When shall the day be, of all the year,
The day that the maidens may call their own,
When every one in her newest gear,
The gayest ribbons, the richest gown,
Laughter and joy shall give to the town?
'Tis in the spring, so bright and gay,
In the pleasantest month, the month of May,
And the maidens' day is Ascension Day.

And on this day of the joyous Spring,
Should every maiden be dressed in green;
When at break of day the Church bells ring;
Spread out the feast with napkins clean;
Let all the Spring's best gifts be seen;
Spread out the feast with flowers gay;
'Tis the pleasantest month, the month of May,
And this is Ascension, the maidens' day.

Beauty the maidens typify;
Spring's simple food, our hearts' content;
The napkins white, our purity;
The green grass, friendship's firmament;
The flowers their joyousness have lent.
All perfect joy doth come with May;
Blithely sing and dance so gay,
For this is Ascension, the maidens' day."

FROM VILLON.

"Queen of the skies, and regent of the earth;
Empress of all that dwells beneath;
Receive me, poor and low, of little worth,
Among thy chosen after death.
Nothing I bring with me; nothing I have:
But yet thy mercy, Lady, is as great
As all my sum of sins: beyond the grave,
Without thy mercy, none can ask of fate
To enter heaven; and without guile or lie
I in thy faith will faithful live and die.

Only a woman, humble, poor, and old;
Letters I read not; nothing know;
But see in Church with painted flames of gold
That Hell where all the wicked go:
And, joyous with glad harps, God's Paradise.
One fills my heart with fear; one with delight.
For sinners all may turn repentant eyes
To thee, O Lady, merciful and bright,
With faith downladen—without guile or lie
I in thy faith will faithful live and die."

FROM CLOTILDE DE SURVILLE.

"Take, child—thy father's image—take repose
Upon the bosom that thy lips have pressed:
Sleep, little one: at last let slumber close
Those restless eyes upon thy mother's breast.

Rest, little one: let softer, sweeter sleep
Weigh down thine eyes than even falls on me:
Thee to protect my sleepless watch I keep—
Ah! sweet it is to waken—sweet—for thee.

Sleep, baby, sleep, my idol and my care:
My breast thy pillow and thy bed I lay:
Hush! baby voice I loved just now to hear,
And smiles I loved just now, cease, cease to play.

Sleep, darling: thou shalt wake and smile once more:
Smile in a fond reply to my fond gaze:
See how he knows me with his childish lore;
And in my eyes has learned his own to trace.

He drops his arms: sleep weighs his eyelids down:
Stilled, silent: see—he hardly draws his breath;
And but for those bright hues of red and brown,
Might one deem—almost—this the sleep of death.

Ah! darling, wake; I tremble with affright:
To chase this fatal thought wake, wake once more:
My child, awake; one moment see the light;
And at the cost of thine, my peace restore.

THE END.

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